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# HUME :

THE RELATION OF  
THE TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE—BOOK I  
TO THE INQUIRY CONCERNING  
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

BY

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

LONDON : MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.

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## PREFACE.

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This monograph was begun in 1892 as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Cornell University.

Owing to the extensiveness of the literature on the subject, the writer's task proved to be a much larger one than he had, at first, expected. Although the dissertation was finished in 1894, and the main results were published in the November number of *The Philosophical Review* for that year, the author was not quite satisfied with the fruits of his labor. Hence he continued the study. The whole has since been rewritten, and some portions have been amplified. On account of the press of other duties, the completion of the work has been unavoidably delayed, so that the book appears now like one born out of due time. But it is hoped that the length of its embryonic period has tended only to develop and mature its organic structure.

While Green and Grose's edition of Hume's philosophical works is the one which was used as the basis of study, it was not thought necessary, when giving quotations, to follow the text in its archaic forms of spelling. Hume's punctuation, of course, has been retained.

In conclusion, the author desires to express his obligations to Professor J. E. Creighton, under whose direction the work was originally written, for his many valuable criticisms and helpful suggestions; to

Dr. N. E. Truman, on whom fell the laborious task of reading the proofs and verifying the references; and to The Sage School of Philosophy, which spared neither trouble nor expense to procure any books of reference that were thought helpful for the work.

W. B. E.

COLUMBIA, Mo.

May 31, 1904.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*—The history of English empirical philosophy is sometimes likened to a drama in five acts. In the first act, a system of empiricism is inaugurated by Bacon; in the second and third, the dialectic movement is gradually unfolded by Hobbes and Locke; in the fourth, the usual complications arise through the criticisms and transformations of Berkeley; finally, in the fifth, the scene closes with the annihilating catastrophe of Hume.<sup>1</sup>

But as Hume marked the melancholy close of the era of sensationalism, he heralded the inspiring dawn of a brighter epoch, the era of idealism, and at the same time laid the foundation for a synthesis of the two, in the more scientific movement of the present age. Reid in Scotland and Kant in Germany were awakened, almost simultaneously, from their dogmatic slumbers, by the subtle and irresistible dialectic of the great skeptic. British and German philosophy, however, when drifting peacefully toward a euthanasia, far from being overwhelmed by the storm of Hume's criticism, were only instigated thereby to make a new tack in the never-ending pursuit of speculative truth. With felicity no less than impressiveness, Sir William Hamilton, in his introductory lecture in 1836, declared: "The man who gave the whole philosophy of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Grimm, *Zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems von Bacon zu Hume*, Vorwort.

Europe a new impulse and direction, and to whom, mediately or immediately, must be referred every subsequent advance in philosophical speculation, was our countryman—David Hume. . . . The skepticism of Hume, like an electric spark, sent life through the paralyzed opinions; philosophy awoke to renovated vigor, and its problems were again to be considered in other aspects, and subjected to a more searching analysis.”

It matters little in what manner the position of “the last great English philosopher” be designated in the history of speculative thought, for his system is so unique, and so significant that it will always awaken the most profound reflection, as well as merit the most candid examination. The study of Hume’s works, however, is unusually perplexing, and the true significance of his philosophy of human nature extremely difficult accurately to determine, partly, because of the different phases of thought, obscurities, ambiguities, and even inconsistencies that appear in his writings, but chiefly, because of the twofold exposition of his system. Before a just estimation of his philosophy can be arrived at, the more important relations subsisting between his philosophical writings must be ascertained. It is, therefore, a question of much interest what the relations of his chief works are to one another. Moreover, this question is also one of much importance. For although Hume’s influence is not perhaps so great now as when James Hutchison Stirling wrote:<sup>1</sup> “Hume is our Politics, Hume is our Trade, Hume is our Philosophy, Hume is our Religion,—it wants little but that Hume were even

*The Secret of Hegel*, p. lxxiii.



our Taste," his once striking position in philosophical and political thought is still justly prominent. "The *Treatise of Human Nature* and the *Critic of Pure Reason*," remarked his most relentless critic,<sup>1</sup> "taken together, form the real bridge between the old world of philosophy and the new. They are the essential 'Propædæutic,' without which no one is a qualified student of modern philosophy."

Hume's great philosophical work is *A Treatise of Human Nature*. It consists of three books: I, "Of the Understanding"; II, "Of the Passions"; III, "Of Morals";—*intellect, feeling, and will*. The first two volumes were published in 1739, and the third in 1740. It seems, however, that the book was written as early as 1736, when Hume was only twenty-five years old.<sup>2</sup> True, in accordance with one of the author's distinctive characteristics, it was continually revised, up to the very time of publication.<sup>3</sup> Yet the changes which were made appear to have dealt with form more than with content; and so far as they had reference to content, they were made rather in the way of omission, than in the way of development.<sup>4</sup> But the *Treatise of Human Nature* awakened no interest, and received almost no notice; it "fell *dead-born from the press*,"—to use the expressive words of the author. Nevertheless, Hume, thinking that he

<sup>1</sup> Hume's Philosophical Works, I. Green's "Introduction," p. 3.—The references throughout are to the Green and Grose edition; I, 1890; II, 1882; III and IV, 1889. Since I, contains the *Treatise* and IV, the *Inquiry*, in explicit references to these works the volume number is not given.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, I, pp. 98, 337.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64.

had made a mistake in publishing too early, still believed that his system of philosophy was of permanent value.<sup>1</sup> Hence, he revised the *Treatise of Human Nature*, and published it in much briefer, and more popular form. The abbreviated work appeared as follows: *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding*, 1748; *An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751; *A Dissertation on the Passions*, 1757. It is only with the first book of each group that I propose to deal in the present volume. These books will be designated respectively, for the sake of convenience and in accordance with common usage, the *Treatise*, and the *Inquiry*. Reference, of course, will be made, from time to time, to Hume's other philosophical writings, for the purpose of throwing additional light upon the subject, or in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the matter under discussion.

§ 2. *Aim*.—There is a general impression that the position which Hume adopted in the *Inquiry* is not identical with that which he had previously assumed in the *Treatise*, and consequently, that the philosophical principles of the later work are not exactly the same as those of the earlier. It is sometimes said that the *Inquiry* represents the position of the empiricist, or positivist, while the *Treatise* represents the position of the skeptic;—as was remarked recently by one of the most brilliant philosophical writers of our time:<sup>2</sup> “The *Treatise* is the close of sensationalist philosophy, the *Inquiry* the beginning of common sense philosophy.” Hence, it is

<sup>1</sup> Hume, *My Own Life*.

<sup>2</sup> Schurman, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. VII, p. 10, n.



inferred that the later work, not being so negative as the earlier, represents an important change as having occurred in the author's thought when his mind became more mature.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, some writers assert that the position, or standpoint of both books is essentially the same.<sup>2</sup> But then, regarding the exact nature of that position there are again differences of opinion; Huxley,<sup>3</sup> for example, insisting that it is mainly positive, and Green<sup>4</sup> maintaining that it is chiefly negative. If we appeal to the testimony of the author himself, this confusion is by no means removed. For in the advertisement to the second volume of the posthumous and authoritative edition of his *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*—a volume containing the Inquiry,—not only does Hume complain that “several writers, who have honored the author's philosophy with answers, have taken care to direct all their batteries against the juvenile work, which the author never acknowledged,” but he concludes as follows:<sup>5</sup> “Henceforth, the author desires, that the following pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.” Yet on another occasion, in a letter to Gil-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 120, 273, 274; Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, II, p. 128; Falckenberg, *Gesch. d. neueren Phil.*, second ed., p. 185, n. 2; Hyslop, *Hume's Treatise on Morals*, p. 17; Hunt, *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XI, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Green, “Introduction to Hume”; Huxley, *Hume*, pp. 11, 45; Webb, *Veil of Isis*, p. 71; McCosh, *Hist. of Scottish Phil.*, p. 123; Jahn, *D. H. Causalitätstheorie*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume*, pp. 51, 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Hume's Philosophical Works*, Preface to Vol. I, and General Introd.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 38.

bert Elliot, he says:<sup>1</sup> "I believe the Philosophical Essays [the Inquiry] contain every thing of consequence relating to the understanding, which you would meet with in the Treatise; and I give you my advice against reading the latter. By shortening and simplifying the questions, I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo*. The philosophical principles are the same in both; but I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately." To clear up this obscurity on the question regarding Hume's exact position in his two chief philosophical works is the aim of the present investigation.

§ 3. *The General Relation of the Treatise and Inquiry to Hume's other Philosophical Writings.*—Before entering upon the work in detail, it may be well to indicate, in a general way, the relation in which these two books stand, (1) to the philosophical writings with which they are connected, and (2) to each other. The first of these topics will be treated in the present section, the second, in the following section.

As has already been said, it is only the first book of each group that falls within the scope of this investigation. But here two questions at once suggest themselves: (1) What are the relations of the different books within each group to one another? and (2) Can the relation of the Treatise to the Inquiry be thoroughly examined without taking account also of the books with which these two are respectively connected? Leaving aside the second question for the moment, we find a partial answer to the first, in the ad-

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 337; cf. p. 98.

vertisement to Books I and II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. "The reader must only observe," says Hume, "that all the subjects I have there planned out to myself, are not treated of in these two volumes. The subjects of the Understanding and Passions make a complete chain of reasoning by themselves; and I was willing to take advantage of this natural division, in order to try the taste of the public. If I have the good fortune to met with success, I shall proceed to the examination of Morals, Politics, and Criticism; which will complete this Treatise of Human Nature." Here it is seen that Hume regarded Books I and II as forming a connected piece, thus practically constituting one book. But the relation of these two volumes to the third is not so close, as the author has already indicated, and as he afterwards specifies more definitely in the advertisement to Book III. "I think it proper to inform the public," he says, "that though this be a third volume of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, yet it is in some measure independent of the other two, and requires not that the reader should enter into all the abstract reasonings contained in them. . . . It must only be observed, that I continue to make use of the terms, *impressions* and *ideas*, in the same sense as formerly." From these quotations we learn that Hume's philosophy, so far as it is presented in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, falls into two general divisions which are, in large measure, independent of each other, viz., the philosophy of the understanding and passions on the one hand, and the philosophy of morals on the other.

In the first section of the Inquiry, the author adopts the twofold classification of mental science

which the Latins had inherited from the Greeks, which the scholastics had popularized, and which prevailed in occidental philosophy generally, until superseded by the tripartite division of Kant;—a division which, through the present dominating influence of the biological sciences, is again giving place to the Aristotelian classification. Hume states that moral philosophy or the science of human nature “may be treated after two different manners,” abstractly, or concretely.<sup>1</sup> And besides making this distinction in method, he recognizes a corresponding division of subject-matter, viz., the “abstruse” or theoretical philosophy, and the “easy” or practical; the former being conversant with the understanding, and the latter with the feelings and will. Thus he asserts:<sup>2</sup> “There are many obvious distinctions [between the powers and faculties of the mind], such as those between the will and understanding, the imagination and passions, which fall within the comprehension of every human creature.” This same division is implied in the first book of the *Treatise of Human Nature*,<sup>3</sup> and is explicitly made in the third book.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Hume’s philosophy, so far as it is presented in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, and in the *Inquiries and Dissertation*—thus omitting Politics and Criticism, subjects with which we have no direct concern,—although falling externally into three divisions, may properly be regarded as consisting of two parts, theoretical, and practical. Theoretical philosophy is treated in Book I of the *Treatise of Human Nature*,

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> P. 10.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 543.

<sup>4</sup> II, pp. 235, 236.



and in the *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*. While practical philosophy is treated in Books II and III of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, and in the *Dissertation on the Passions* and the *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*.

We come now to a closer examination of our question. What are the relations of dependence in which the books within each group stand to one another? An answer is found in the second section of Book I, and in the first section of Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. All the perceptions of the mind are impressions and ideas. All impressions and ideas are those of sensation, and those of reflection. It may be said that Book I treats of impressions and ideas of sensation,<sup>1</sup> Books II and III of impressions and ideas of reflection. Now, since impressions of sensation are the perceptions that appear first in the mind, while ideas of sensation are but copies of these; and since impressions of reflections arise "either from the original impressions, or from their ideas;"<sup>2</sup> the treatment of impressions and ideas of reflection will be dependent on that of impressions and ideas of sensation, and not *vice versa*. Consequently, Books II and III are dependent on Book I, but Book I is not dependent on Books II and III. In the *Inquiries* and *Dissertation* the two sections just mentioned are omitted. Moreover, among these works there is no connection indicated, except the general relation between the subjects of which they treat, theoretical philosophy, and practical. The *Inquiries* and *Dissertation* were not only written at different times, but

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> II, p. 76.

also in a chronological order different from that of the corresponding books of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. They stand, therefore, practically, in no relation of dependence upon one another.

It is now easy to answer the second question, viz., Can the relation of the *Treatise* to the *Inquiry* properly be investigated without a special examination of Hume's other philosophical writings? The answer is in the affirmative, for the following reasons:—(1) Only the first two books of the *Treatise of Human Nature* are closely connected, and regarding them, there is a relation of dependence only on the part of the second. (2) The *Inquiries* and *Dissertation* are, practically, not only separate works, but also independent. (3) The *Treatise* and *Inquiry* contain all of Hume's epistemology and metaphysics that is of permanent or real value for the history of philosophy.

§ 4. *The General Relations of the Treatise and Inquiry to each other.*—We turn now for a moment to the general relations in which the *Treatise* and *Inquiry* stand to each other. These may be considered under the two heads of form, and content.

I. The General Relation of the *Treatise* to the *Inquiry* with regard to Form. Here two points may be noted, style, and arrangement.

1. Style. Dr. Johnson said that Hume's style was not English but French. Johnson, however, was not an unbiased critic of Hume. Yet Grose admits that, so far as the structure of sentences is concerned, Hume was influenced by the literature of France at the time he wrote the *Treatise*.<sup>1</sup> We think it may be questioned, whether the French element—if such

<sup>1</sup> III, p. 40.

it can be called—in Hume's style was not due more to immaturity and originality, than to the influence of French literature. The numerous Scotticisms are significant of the author's provincialism, as well as of his immaturity. Notwithstanding the many expressions of candor, diffidence, hesitation, and skepticism, there is not a little pedantry, superficiality, egotism, and dogmatism. "This work," observed his reviewer,<sup>1</sup> "abounds throughout with egotisms. The author could scarcely use that form of speech more frequently, if he had written his own Memoirs." Now and then, there occurs an expression of insincerity, irony, or ambiguous humor, which is extremely puzzling. In some of the repetitions, what is evidently meant to be the same thing is expressed so differently that it is no longer the same. And besides Hume's philosophical mode of expression, there is his habit of speaking with "the vulgar." These two forms of statement occasionally mingle with each other, or at least seem to mingle, with the result that the reasoning, at times, becomes inextricably confused. Nevertheless, Knight<sup>2</sup> speaks in high appreciation of the "admirable literary form" of the Treatise, and its unequalled *lucidity*, both of thought and of expression." But with Knight's opinion, respecting the lucidity of the Treatise, very few students of Hume—and probably none except Scotsmen,—no matter how enthusiastic they may be in praise of "the master," will be able to concur.

In the Inquiry, the Scotticisms and French phraseology have been superseded by the smooth and

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of the Learned*, Nov., 1739.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume*, p. 26; cf. Burton, *Life*, I, p. 91.

polished diction, so characteristic of Hume's later writings. Redundancy, in most cases, has been transformed to brevity. The depth of thought and labored mode of expression of the philosopher have, in large measure, given place to the superficiality and elegance of the author. Hence, while the *Treatise* is a difficult book to read, the *Inquiry* is an easy one. Hume thus realized, in part at least, the wish that he expressed at the close of the first section: "Happy, if we can unite the boundaries of the different species of philosophy, by reconciling profound inquiry with clearness, and truth with novelty!"

This change of style, in the later work, is easily explained. In the introduction to the *Treatise* Hume remarked:<sup>1</sup> "No man needs ever despair of gaining proselytes to the most extravagant hypothesis, who has art enough to represent it in any favorable colors." In a letter to Hutcheson, in 1740, he wrote:<sup>2</sup> "I wish I could discover more fully the particulars wherein I have failed. I admire so much the candor I have observed in Mr. Locke, yourself, and a very few more, that I would be extremely ambitious of imitating it, by frankly confessing my errors." In the *Autobiography* he asserted: "I had always entertained a notion, that my want of success in publishing the *Treatise of Human Nature*, had proceeded more from the manner than the matter, and that I had been guilty of a very usual indiscretion, in going to the press too early." And in the first section of the *Inquiry*<sup>3</sup> he acknowledges that the abstractness of philosophical speculations "is no recommendation, but

<sup>1</sup> P. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> III, p. 3.



rather a disadvantage to them," and that "this difficulty may perhaps be surmounted by care and art, and the avoiding of all unnecessary detail." It is not surprising, therefore, that Hume toiled incessantly, with unwearying pains, to acquire a good English style;<sup>1</sup> nor is it remarkable that his persistent efforts were crowned with the most gratifying success. In due time he became "the one master of philosophic English."<sup>2</sup>

Still another cause that might be assigned for the change of style, in the *Inquiry*, was the author's desire to suit his work to the taste of his readers.<sup>3</sup> For the third volume of the *Treatise of Human Nature* was written "in an age, wherein the greatest part of men [seemed] agreed to convert reading into an amusement, and to reject every thing that [required] any considerable degree of attention to be comprehended."<sup>4</sup> And the *Inquiry* was prepared in a period which Hume implicitly characterized in a similar manner.<sup>5</sup> Whereas, the first volume of the *Treatise of Human Nature* was written at a time when "personal identity" had become "so great a question in philosophy," especially in England, "where all the abstruser sciences [were] studied with a peculiar ardor and application."<sup>6</sup>

2. Arrangement. Concerning arrangement, the writers on Hume, in accordance with their usual cus-

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, pp. 79-81; cf. Tytler, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Henry Home of Kames*, I, pp. 170-173.

<sup>2</sup> III, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 62, 63, 273.

<sup>4</sup> II, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. IV, pp. 4-12.

<sup>6</sup> I, p. 539; cf. p. 308.

tom, differ diametrically in opinion. Burton states:<sup>1</sup> "It has been generally and justly remarked, that the Treatise is among the least systematic of philosophical works—that it has neither a definite and comprehensive plan, nor a logical arrangement." On the other hand, Adamson declares:<sup>2</sup> "The course of Hume's work follows immediately from his fundamental principle, and the several divisions of the Treatise, so far as the theoretical portions are concerned, are but its logical consequences." While the first view here expressed is inaccurate, and the second is inadequate; yet in the former, there is an element of truth, as in the latter, there is an implication of error. The correct view, as indeed one might expect, lies about midway between the two extremes.<sup>3</sup> The Treatise, as a whole, is systematically arranged, but detailed portions are not. If the work be viewed in its entirety methodical arrangement, according to a definite plan, is clearly manifest. Thus Part I gives an account of the contents of the individual mind, of impressions and ideas, or of what Hume calls "the elements" of the philosophy of human nature.<sup>4</sup> Part II treats of the ideas of space and time, and Part III deals with the idea of cause and effect; that is, Part II may be

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, I, p. 66; cf. Ritchie, *Life of Hume*, p. 305; Meinong, *Hume-Studien*, II, p. 27; Knight, *Hume*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, ninth ed., art. *Hume*, p. 352; cf. Jacob, *David Hume über die menschliche Natur*, I, p. 532; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren Humes im Treatise u. im Inquiry*, p. 2, n.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, pp. 573–576; Jodl, *Leben u. Phil. D. H.*, p. 200; Pfeiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis in D. H. Phil.*, p. 132.—Grimm's treatment of this question is the best that has yet appeared.

<sup>4</sup> I, p. 321.

said to treat of the abstract element of human knowledge, while Part III deals with the concrete element. Finally, Part IV explains the ideas of self and substance, exhibiting the logical results of the previous treatment, and expressing the relation of the knowing consciousness to known objects; that is, it investigates the relation of knowledge to the supposed self and external things, the relation of impressions and ideas as cognitive to impressions and ideas as cognized.<sup>1</sup>

There is also a gradual transition between the principal divisions of the work. The last section of Part I deals with general ideas, and prepares the way for the discussion of the ideas of space and time in Part II. The last section of Part II, treating of the ideas of existence and external existence, serves as an introduction to Part III.<sup>2</sup> And the last section of Part III, "Of the Reason of Animals," besides containing an argument in confirmation of the truth of Hume's system, as thus far presented, is at the same time a preparation for what follows in Part IV. When one descends to further particulars, however, one finds that the minor divisions of the book are often ill-arranged, both in their relations to one another, and in their internal structure. At one time the reasoning is fragmentary; at another, it is long drawn out, stated in different ways, or repeated to weariness. Not only are the arguments disproportioned, but essential matter is sometimes mingled with non-essential; trivial paradoxes are occasionally introduced, or terms are used with varying meanings, until the central thought becomes almost completely ob-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 369.

secured by attendant circumstances, or inextricably confused through perplexing ambiguities.

Since the later work is, in some measure, a recast of the earlier, the general order of discussion is similar in both. But inasmuch as portions of the *Treatise* are omitted in the *Inquiry*, and new material is introduced, while the resulting treatment is clearer, freer from ambiguities and contradictions, the arrangement of the later work is less systematic than that of the earlier. The points of transition, formerly observable, do not appear in the *Inquiry*. Abstract ideas are treated here only in the last section, and then merely incidentally. The ideas of existence and external existence are scarcely mentioned. And the section on the reason of animals is entirely cut off from related topics by new material. These changes, except that arising from the introduction of new matter—a subject on which more will be said presently,—may be accounted for by the abridged form of the later work. But then the question immediately arises, Why was the later work abbreviated? This inquiry brings us to the next subject for discussion, and will be dealt with in the remaining part of the present section.

II. The General Relations of the *Treatise* to the *Inquiry* with regard to Subject-matter. The *Inquiry* is mainly a restatement, in abbreviated form, of certain portions of the *Treatise*, Parts I and III. To Henry Home, in 1737, Hume wrote:<sup>1</sup> “I am sorry I am not able to satisfy your curiosity by giving you some general notion of the plan upon which I proceed. But my opinions are so new, and even some terms

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 62.



that I am obliged to make use of, that I could not propose, by any abridgment, to give my system an air of likelihood, or so much as make it intelligible. It is a thing I have in vain attempted already, at a gentleman's request in this place, who thought it would help him to comprehend and judge of my notions, if he saw them all at once before him." The difficulty here referred to may be the cause why Hume, instead of giving a summary or outline of his philosophy, in the *Inquiry*, presents a full statement of some subjects, gives an abridgment of others, and omits others entirely. Thus Parts I and III are largely rewritten. But the only division corresponding to Parts II and IV is section xii. And this section, although it deals to some extent with nearly all the topics that are treated in the corresponding portions of the earlier work, is by no means an adequate abstract or synopsis of them.

It is interesting to learn from a letter of Hume, in 1755, to his publisher, Millar,<sup>1</sup> that Part II of the *Treatise* was rewritten. The monograph, however, never appeared. As a reason for not publishing this revision, Grose<sup>2</sup> suggests that "perhaps the author despaired of the subject being popular." Other writers on Hume have also expressed their opinions on this question. But in general, their views are mere conjectures, groundless as they are various. The only reason positively known, why this revision of Part II was not published, is that given by the author himself in a letter to Strahan:<sup>3</sup> "I intended to print

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 421.

<sup>2</sup> III, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Hill, *Letters of David Hume to William Strahan*, p. 230.—  
For many years it was supposed that Hume's letters to

four Dissertations," he says, "the natural History of Religion, on the Passions, on Tragedy, and on the metaphysical Principles of Geometry. I sent them up to Mr. Millar; but before the last was printed, I happened to meet with Lord Stanhope, who was in this country, and he convinced me, that either there was some defect in the argument or in its perspicuity; I forget which; and I wrote to Mr. Millar, that I would not print that Essay." Were one controversially inclined, one might now undertake to show that the former of the two reasons, here mentioned, was the chief one why the "Metaphysical Principles of Geometry" was not printed. For defect in perspicuity, although a sufficient reason why the dissertation should not appear as a part of the Inquiry, is not a satisfactory explanation why, when in the form of an essay, it should have been suppressed for all time. It is not worth while, however, to carry the discussion of this point farther; for the fact, that the author forgot whether the defect was in the "argument" or in the "perspicuity," tends to imply that the essay was open to criticism in both these respects.

Hume also gives a hint why some important portions of Part IV were omitted in the later work. In the appendix to the Treatise<sup>1</sup> he confesses that, on a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, he found himself involved in such a labyrinth, that he knew neither "how to correct" his Strahan had been destroyed, as it was Strahan's custom not to preserve the letters which he received; cf. Burton, *Life*, II, p. 477, n. 2.

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 558, 559; cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, pp. 580, 582.

former opinions, nor "how to render them consistent." This acknowledgment indicates that, soon after the publication of the Treatise, Hume perceived perfectly well one of the main difficulties inherent in his system. It is significant, therefore, that in the Inquiry, not merely is the question of personal identity omitted, but the other more important subjects, in the discussion of which inconsistencies or absurdities become most apparent, are also either omitted entirely, or are only incidentally referred to; for example, philosophical relations, space and time, mathematics, substance—material and spiritual—and an external world. Now all these subjects, except philosophical relations, are treated in Parts II and IV of the earlier work. The conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable, that Hume, when preparing the Inquiry for publication, being extremely anxious to have his theory of knowledge appear in a favorable light before the public, was swayed by the characteristic shrewdness of the "canny" Scotsman, and purposely omitted, or left in the background, these difficult and perplexing questions.

Some writers think that Hume omitted, in the Inquiry, his doctrine of substance lest it should prejudice the work in the eyes of the public;<sup>1</sup> and others assert that he omitted the doctrine of personal identity, lest it should shock too severely religious sentiment.<sup>2</sup> The former of these views may contain an element of truth, but the latter is entirely erroneous. Hume was much more considerate toward the religious sentiments of the people when preparing the Treatise

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Selby-Bigge, *Hume's Enquiries*, Introd.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 474, n. 1.

for publication, than when writing the Inquiry. On the former occasion, he withdrew certain obnoxious portions, including the argument against miracles, in order that the work might give "as little offence as possible;"<sup>1</sup> but on the latter, he had no such prudential scruples when dealing with religious questions.<sup>2</sup> It is true, Hume had, in general, much regard for public opinion; but he rarely manifested any concern for what he called "superstition," or religious bigotry.

The omissions mentioned above are partly counter-balanced by the introduction of two new sections—x and xi—which deal with miracles and the practical consequences of natural religion, and by the transference of the discussion on liberty and necessity from the second book of the *Treatise of Human Nature* to the Inquiry, where it follows immediately the treatment of necessary connection, and forms a complete section by itself, section viii. These additions to the later work serve to illustrate the practical application of Hume's theoretical principles within the sphere of morality and religion. And there can be little doubt that one of the chief aims of the author in making these changes was to induce people to examine his philosophical system. He hoped, by the publication of the *Treatise*, to obtain much fame on account of the originality, boldness, and practical tendencies of his philosophy of human nature.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, therefore, he was greatly disappointed when the book failed to make a noise in the world. But he

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 63, 64.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *My Own Life*; Burton, *Life*, I, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *My Own Life*; Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 64, 108.



resolved to profit by his adverse experience. Soon after the publication of the first two volumes, he sent to Hutcheson, for perusal, the manuscript of the third volume, the *Treatise of Morals*. And in the course of his reply to Hutcheson's suggestions and friendly criticism he significantly observed:<sup>1</sup> "I have many other reflections to communicate to you; but it would be troublesome. I shall therefore conclude with telling you, that I intend to follow your advice in altering most of those passages you have remarked as defective in point of prudence; though, I must own, I think you a little too delicate. Except a man be in orders, or be immediately concerned in the instruction of youth, I do not think his character depends upon his philosophical speculations, as the world is now modelled; and a little liberty seems requisite to bring into the public notice a book that is calculated for few readers." Some years later, when writing the *Inquiry*, the author astutely availed himself of "a little liberty," in order to bring the book into public notice.

It has been commonly thought that Hume manifested one of the few weak points in his character by making a high bid for that notoriety for which his soul craved, when in the *Inquiry* he introduced the sections dealing with miracles, providence, and immortality.<sup>2</sup> But the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, in this criticism of popular religious conceptions, had a much deeper object in view than the attainment of mere notoriety. He wished to call the attention of readers to the importance of his new

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Selby-Bigge, *Humes Enquiries*, Introd.; Huxley, *Hume*, p. 11; III, p. 36.

system. That the scheme was well conceived, and that it was eminently successful, later philosophical discussion has most abundantly testified.

The transference of the section on liberty and necessity from the second book of the *Treatise of Human Nature* to its appropriate place in the *Inquiry*—directly after the section on necessary connection—may have been prompted somewhat by logical considerations. But it seems indubitable, because of the new mode of treatment which the subject received, that the change was made chiefly for the purpose of stimulating public curiosity. For the most important alteration, in the later presentation, is the greater prominence given to the difficulties that, on any theory of the will, whether deterministic or libertarian, arise in the sphere of philosophy of religion. This discussion, along with those on miracles, providence, and immortality, Hume undoubtedly thought would at once arouse the indignation of “the zealots.” But he was again grievously disappointed. In the *Autobiography* he expressed his mortification to find, on his return from Italy, “all England in a ferment, on account of Dr. Middleton’s *Free Enquiry*,” while his own performance was “entirely overlooked and neglected.” Yet in the long run, the author of the philosophy of human nature was not far wrong in his calculation. He had accurately gauged some of the fundamental qualities of mankind. In a few years, his bookseller informed him that his “former publications (all but the unfortunate *Treatise*) were beginning to be the subject of conversation,” and that new editions of them were demanded.<sup>1</sup> “Answers

<sup>1</sup> *My Own Life*.

by Reverends, and Right Reverends, came out two or three in a year''; and Hume found, ''by Dr. Warburton's railing, that [his] books were beginning to be esteemed in good company.'' Since then, no writer on miracles has neglected to mention the great skeptic; while to refute him has been the ardent aim and earnest endeavor of every Christian apologist.

§ 5. *Mode of Procedure.*—It is now only necessary to add a word with regard to method, in order to conclude this introduction. I propose to proceed topically, treating each subject of importance separately, and following as closely as possible the order of the earlier work. In the topical treatment I shall state, first, the doctrine of the Treatise on the point in question; secondly, the position of the Inquiry on the same subject, noting the differences of view that may exist, whether in the way of omission, addition, or modification; and thirdly, indicate, as far as possible, the reasons for the changes that appear in the later work.

## CHAPTER II.

### HUME'S AIM, SUBJECT-MATTER, AND METHOD.

§ 6. *Hume's Aim*.—We now enter upon the subject proper of our investigation, viz., the relation of Hume's earlier philosophical principles to his later, as they are set forth respectively, in the *Treatise*, and in the *Inquiry*. The first question to determine is that of aim. Accordingly, in the present chapter, we shall compare the introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature* with the first section of the *Inquiry*. Throughout, it will be borne in mind, of course, that the prefatory remarks in the *Treatise* are an introduction to the science of man,<sup>1</sup> while the first section of the *Inquiry* is an introduction to only one part of the science of man, the theoretical part. Much light will thus be thrown on some of the differences that exist between these two forms of statement, that is, between the general introduction to the science of man, and the introduction to the theoretical part of the science of man.<sup>2</sup>

In the advertisement to the earlier work, Hume said that his "design" was sufficiently explained in the introduction. Nevertheless, his readers have never arrived at any general agreement regarding what his design, or purpose was. Thus Mackintosh asserts:<sup>3</sup> "[Hume] aimed at proving, not that nothing

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 7, above.

<sup>3</sup> *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, p. 137; cf. Reid's *Works*, I, p. 183.



was known, but that nothing could be known;—from the structure of the understanding to demonstrate, that we are doomed for ever to dwell in absolute and universal ignorance.” Priestley:<sup>1</sup> “According to [Hume’s] own very frank confession, his object was mere *literary reputation*. It was not the *pursuit of truth*, or the advancement of virtue or happiness.” Stirling:<sup>2</sup> “Hume’s final aim, of course, is the destruction of what is to him superstition.” Huxley:<sup>3</sup> “The aim of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* is essentially the same as that of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, by which indeed Kant was led to develop that critical philosophy with which his name and fame are indissolubly bound up.” Stewart:<sup>4</sup> “[Hume’s] aim is to establish a universal skepticism, and to produce in the reader a complete distrust in his own faculties.” It is unnecessary to multiply examples further. Diversity of view on this question is doubtless due as much to objective differences in the two accounts of Hume’s philosophy, as to subjective differences in the various interpreters.

The key to the solution of this problem is to be found only in Hume’s life. From his “earliest infancy” he exhibited a strong inclination to books and letters. When a youth he amused himself in leisure hours writing on psychological, ethical, or literary subjects.<sup>5</sup> At eighteen, he experienced for a few

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, p. 125; cf. Morris, *British Thought and Thinkers*, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Mind*, Vol. IX, p. 533; cf. *Revue Philosophique*, Vol. XII, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume*, p. 58; cf. Pfleiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Collected Works*, I, p. 437; cf. McCosh, *Hist. of Scottish Phil.*, pp. 153, 154.

<sup>5</sup> *Burton, Life*, I, p. 13.

months the ecstasy of "philosophical conversion." "There seemed to be opened up to me," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "a new scene of thought, which transported me beyond measure, and made me, with an ardor natural to young men, throw up every other pleasure or business to apply [myself] entirely to it." Hume now felt that he had a message to deliver to the world. He would work a revolution in philosophy or moral science, similar to that which Bacon had effected in physical science. He resolved on the plan of writing a complete system of philosophy, as Spencer did a little more than one hundred years later. This project he also carried out, although—since the *Treatise* did not "meet with success"—not without some modifications, and not quite so thoroughly as he had at first intended. For instead of the volumes on politics and criticism, which were to form part of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, there appeared only the moral and political essays, two essays on religion, and a few fragmentary pieces.

Like every philosopher who has a new doctrine to propound, Hume discovered that the current theories of knowledge were exceedingly defective.<sup>2</sup> At the age of twenty-three he wrote:<sup>3</sup> "Every one who is acquainted either with the philosophers or critics, knows that there is nothing yet established in either of these two sciences, and that they contain little more than endless disputes, even in the most fundamental articles." In the introduction to the *Treatise*, he expresses himself no less strongly. Regarding philosophy, he says:<sup>4</sup> "Principles taken upon

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kant, *Kritik d. r. Vernunft*, Vorrede.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> P. 305.

trust, consequences lamely deduced from them, want of coherence in the parts, and of evidence in the whole, these are everywhere to be met with in the systems of the most eminent philosophers, and seem to have drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself." And concerning the sciences, he asserts:<sup>1</sup> "Even the rabble without doors may judge from the noise and clamor, which they hear, that all goes not well within. There is nothing which is not the subject of debate, and in which men of learning are not of contrary opinions. The most trivial question escapes not our controversy, and in the most momentous we are not able to give any certain decision."

Hume now proposes to improve this unfortunate state of things by means of his philosophy of human nature, or, as he frequently calls it, the science of man. In a similar manner had Bacon, Locke, Descartes, and many other thinkers hoped, with the aid of philosophy, to advance the sciences and extend knowledge. "I cannot forbear," says Hume,<sup>2</sup> "having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me. . . . I am concerned for the condition of the learned world, which lies under such a deplorable ignorance in all these particulars. I feel an ambition to arise in me of contributing to the instruction of mankind, and of acquiring a name by my inventions and discoveries." All the sciences have a definite relation to human nature; in short, human nature is their "capital or center."<sup>3</sup> "There is no question of importance, whose

<sup>1</sup> P. 305.<sup>2</sup> P. 550.

P. 307.

decision is not comprized in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science." If, therefore, we obtain a mastery of the science of man, "we may extend our conquests over all those sciences, which more intimately concern human life, and may afterwards proceed at leisure to discover more fully those, which are the objects of mere curiosity."<sup>1</sup> "In pretending, therefore," he continues, "to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security." Although Hume here makes extravagant claims for his philosophy, there cannot be any doubt with regard to his meaning. He will write a treatise that will include the sciences of "*Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics*"; a treatise that will not only serve as a handmaid to all the other sciences, but that will at the same time comprehend "almost everything, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind."<sup>2</sup> For he believes he has discovered the "new medium,"<sup>3</sup> by which truth may be established.<sup>4</sup> This thought not only implied a brilliant generalization, but also indicated, in a striking manner, that practical turn of mind so characteristic of the philosophers of Scotland.

In the Inquiry, Hume's aim, on a cursory examina-

<sup>1</sup> P. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aikins, *The Philosophy of Hume*, p. 35; McCosh, *Hist. of Scottish Phil.*, pp. 153, 154; Petzholtz, *Die Hauptpunkte d. H. Erkenntnislehre*, p. 8; Falckenberg, *Hist. of Modern Phil.*, p. 221.



tion, seems to be similar to that of the *Treatise of Human Nature*.<sup>1</sup> In the first section, the author regards knowledge as being in the same imperfect condition as formerly. The "abstruse philosophers," he says,<sup>2</sup> "think it a reproach to all literature, that philosophy should not yet have fixed, beyond controversy, the foundation of morals, reasoning, and criticism; and should for ever talk of truth and falsehood, vice and virtue, beauty and deformity, without being able to determine the source of these distinctions." Hume does not make such large claims, however, on behalf of his philosophy of human nature as he did in the earlier work, probably because of disappointment at the failure of the *Treatise* to call forth public notice.<sup>3</sup> As early as 1740, in a letter to Hutcheson, he said:<sup>4</sup> "I am apt in a cool hour to suspect, in general, that most of my reasonings will be more useful by furnishing hints, and exciting people's curiosity, than as containing any principles that will augment the stock of knowledge, that must pass to future ages." Even in passages of the *Treatise*, he manifested an apprehension that he would not obtain the degree of success he hoped for. He did not expect to make "many proselytes" to his view of belief;<sup>5</sup> he did not doubt that his sentiments on necessary connection would be treated by many of his readers as "extravagant and ridiculous";<sup>6</sup> finally, after bewailing "the wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pilon, *Psychologie de Hume*, p. II.

<sup>2</sup> P. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 105, 108; Hume, *Hist. of England*, VII, p. 359.

<sup>4</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> P. 416.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 461, 468.

the faculties," together with "the impossibility of amending or correcting" them, he made the doleful confession:<sup>1</sup> "This sudden view of my danger [of perishing on the barren rock, on which I am at present], strikes me with melancholy; and as it is usual for that passion, above all others, to indulge itself; I cannot forbear feeding my despair, with all those desponding reflections, which the present subject furnishes me with in such abundance." Hume, no doubt, did not mean all these forebodings to be taken literally. Yet, since the reception given the *Treatise* justified his fears to the full, it is not surprising to find a tone of dejection in the introduction to the *Inquiry*. "Abstruse thought and profound researches," he says,<sup>2</sup> "[nature prohibits], and will severely punish, by the pensive melancholy which they introduce, by the endless uncertainty in which they involve you, and by the cold reception which your pretended discoveries shall meet with, when communicated."

Nevertheless, as before, Hume thinks that the science of man "has its peculiar merit," and that it will contribute to "the entertainment, instruction, and reformation of mankind."<sup>3</sup> After distinguishing theoretical philosophy from practical, he states that the theoretical philosophers "think themselves sufficiently compensated for the labor of their whole lives, if they can discover some hidden truths, which may contribute to the instruction of posterity."<sup>4</sup> He asserts that, by employing the maxim of the priority of

<sup>1</sup> P. 544; cf. Burton, *Life*, I, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> P. 6.

<sup>3</sup> P. 3.

<sup>4</sup> P. 4; cf. IV, p. 253.

impressions to ideas, "we may reasonably hope to remove all disputes, which may arise," concerning the nature and reality of ideas.<sup>1</sup> And he maintains that the science of man will facilitate the advancement of all other sciences; for theoretical philosophy is subservient to practical. The latter without the former, "can never attain a sufficient degree of exactness in its sentiments, precepts, or reasonings"; and a spirit of accuracy carries "every art or profession" nearer its perfection, rendering it "more subservient to the interests of society." Hence, the genius of philosophy gradually diffuses itself "throughout the whole society," and bestows "a similar correctness on every art and calling."<sup>2</sup>

Thus far, although Hume, for the reason already mentioned, is not so sanguine as formerly in his manner of expression, there is no difference noticeable between the aim of the *Treatise of Human Nature* and the aim of the Inquiry. Presently, however, a new aspect of the question emerges. It is objected, in the later work, that "metaphysics," that is, "abstruse philosophy," is not "properly a science," and that "a considerable part of metaphysics" arises either from "the fruitless efforts of human vanity," or from "the craft of popular superstitions."<sup>3</sup> To this the author answers that for the same reason the study of human nature is the more necessary. "The only method of freeing learning, at once, from these abstruse questions, is to inquire seriously into the nature of human understanding, and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects.

<sup>1</sup> P. 17.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 6, 7; cf. p. 24.<sup>3</sup> P. 8.

We must submit to this fatigue, in order to live at ease ever after: And must cultivate true metaphysics with some care, in order to destroy the false and adulterate."<sup>1</sup> And he concludes the section with the hope that he may be able to "undermine the foundations of an abstruse philosophy, which seems to have hitherto served only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error."

Because of the remarks just quoted, and on account of changes in the subject-matter of the Inquiry, many of Hume's interpreters have thought that the aim of the later work is essentially different from that of the earlier. Thus Aikins asserts:<sup>2</sup> "The investigation of Human Nature was undertaken in the hope that through a knowledge of its principles a foundation for all the sciences could be laid."—"The Inquiry, on the other hand, was written after the bitterly disappointing reception given the Treatise had quenched much of Hume's zeal for philosophy and driven him to work in other fields of literature. . . . Now not only was he addressing a popular audience, but he had lost enthusiasm for his subject, and the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding suggests more than a suspicion that Hume's interest in it was more anti-theological than psychological. The introduction speaks, not of the foundation to be laid for all the sciences by the study of human nature, but of popular superstitions to be driven from their shelter among the brambles of metaphysics."<sup>3</sup> Brede<sup>4</sup> and some other critics have expressed a similar view on this question.

<sup>1</sup> P. 9.<sup>2</sup> *Phil. of Hume*, p. 35.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.<sup>4</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 45 ff.; cf. Seth, *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 69.



Respecting the change in subject-matter a general explanation was given in the preceding chapter;<sup>1</sup> further reference to the topic will be made presently.<sup>2</sup> It should be observed now, that those writers who profess to perceive a difference in the aim of the two works neglect to note that, in the concluding section of the *Treatise*, Hume supplements the statement of his aim given in the general introduction. The aim in the introduction, as previously remarked,<sup>3</sup> is the general aim of the whole work, the *Treatise of Human Nature*; that aim as modified in the last section of Book I is the particular aim of the *Treatise*, the book with which we are dealing. In order, therefore, to obtain a correct idea of the aim of the *Treatise*, it is necessary to take account of the concluding section. Here Hume, after stating that the sentiments of curiosity and ambition are "the origin" of his philosophy, asserts:<sup>4</sup> "But even suppose that this curiosity and ambition should not transport me into speculations without the sphere of common life, it would necessarily happen, that from my very weakness I must be led into such inquiries. It is certain, that superstition is much more bold in its systems and hypotheses than philosophy; . . . Since, therefore, it is almost impossible for the mind of man to rest, like those of beasts, in that narrow circle of objects, which are the subject of daily conversation and action, we ought only to deliberate concerning the choice of our guide, and ought to prefer that which is safest and most agreeable. And in this respect I make bold to recommend philosophy, and shall not scruple to

<sup>1</sup>Pp. 16-22.<sup>2</sup>Pp. 36-41.<sup>3</sup>P. 24.<sup>4</sup>Pp. 550, 551; cf. IV, p. 406.

give it the preference to superstition of every kind or denomination." In these sentences, it is true, the author does not explicitly state that one of the objects of the *Treatise* was to overthrow superstition. Nevertheless, such an object is evidently implied, both here and in other passages of the book. Thus he says that, "if we are philosophers, it ought only to be upon skeptical principles, and upon an inclination, which we feel to the employing ourselves after that manner."<sup>1</sup>

It may be objected, perhaps, that the aim of the later work still appears to be somewhat different from that of the earlier. For in the *Treatise*<sup>2</sup> Hume repeatedly repudiates metaphysics, while in the first section of the *Inquiry* he seems to advocate the pursuit of this study. "But may we not hope that philosophy," he asks,<sup>3</sup> "if cultivated with care, and encouraged by the attention of the public, may carry its researches still farther, and discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations?" The rejection of a subject of examination, he continues, on the ground that it does not lie "within the compass of human understanding, "is not desirable; nor ought to be embraced too rashly." The difference here pointed out, however, is only apparent. Hume, in the *Inquiry*,<sup>4</sup> disavows all truly metaphysical investigations as fully as in the *Treatise*. When he expresses the hope that philosophy may discover, "at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the mind is actuated in its opera-

<sup>1</sup> P. 550; cf. pp. 308, 309; IV, pp. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 321, 392, 460.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. pp. 8, 13, 27, 28, 30, 66, 133.



tions," he does not expect to discover the nature of ultimate or metaphysical principles, but only to arrive at an explanation of such principles as "custom," or "the association of ideas." These principles he occasionally speaks of as ultimate or original qualities of human nature, and he tries—"at least in some degree"—to account for the mode of their operation.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Hume, in the introduction to the *Treatise*, reprobates metaphysics, and yet in the first section of the *Inquiry* argues at considerable length in defence of metaphysics, is easily explained. He uses the term in two very different senses. There is the true metaphysics, and the false. The former merely means "profound reasonings," or "every kind of argument, which is any way abstruse";<sup>2</sup> while the latter means rationalistic, or transcendental speculations. Rationalistic speculations Hume universally condemns; but "profound reasonings" he defends in the *Treatise* as well as in the *Inquiry*.<sup>3</sup> Several of the arguments which he adduces in the later work, in favor of philosophical studies, appeared in the earlier, either in the general introduction, or in the concluding section. For instance, in the introduction to the *Inquiry* he commends the study of "metaphysics" as a means of "safe and harmless pleasures"; but in the conclusion to the *Treatise* he asserted:<sup>4</sup> "These sentiments [of curiosity and ambition] spring up naturally in my present disposition; and should I endeavor to banish them, by attaching

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, pp. 321, 330; IV, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 306; IV, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I, pp. 306-309; IV, pp. 6-9.

<sup>4</sup> P. 550.

myself to any other business or diversion, I *feel* I should be a loser in point of pleasure; and this is the origin of my philosophy."

While it is readily admitted that the references, in the later work, to the overthrow of superstition, are more definite and emphatic than are those in the earlier; it must, at the same time, be pointed out that they seem to have been made but incidentally. Hume, in the Inquiry, when still grieving over the sad fate of the Treatise, entered on a special defence of metaphysics, or "profound reasonings." In the course of the discussion it is asserted, as a serious objection to these studies, that "a considerable part of metaphysics" arises either from "the fruitless efforts of human vanity," or from "the craft of popular superstitions." Whereupon, the author naturally replies that there is then so much the more reason why "true" metaphysics should be cultivated with care, in order that superstition, or "the false and adulterate," may be destroyed. That the defence of metaphysics is fuller and more systematic in the Inquiry than in the Treatise, is doubtless due largely to the unfavorable reception accorded to the earlier work. Besides, as has been remarked, the first section of the Inquiry is an introduction to the theoretical part of the science of man, while the corresponding section of the *Treatise of Human Nature* is an introduction to the science in general; and this, Hume probably thought, did not require any special defence or apology.

The aim of the Treatise, therefore, is found upon closer examination to be essentially the same as that of the Inquiry, viz., to explain the nature or char-

acter of human knowledge, through an investigation of the contents of the individual mind, in order to advance science on the one hand, and to overthrow "superstition" and rationalistic philosophy on the other.<sup>1</sup> It is true, the aim is stated in a different manner in the two works; but for this difference, reasons have already been assigned.<sup>2</sup>

In all probability, however, it will still be objected that the aim of both works can hardly be the same, since the Inquiry contains much new material of a polemical character. The force of the objection disappears at once, when one reflects that Hume had already published part of this material in Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*,<sup>3</sup> and that he intended to publish the remainder—all, or at least the larger portion—in Book I, but withdrew it at the last moment, lest it should give "too much offense" as the world was then "disposed."<sup>4</sup> If it be contended further, that the aim of both works is not identical, since much old material is omitted in the Inquiry; the obvious reply is, that these omissions do not necessarily affect Hume's theory of knowledge. Moreover, the essential aim of an abridged work may be exactly the same as that of the complete work. But finally, it will no doubt be said that the character and tone of the two books are fundamentally different, and that the aim must, therefore, be different also. The premises in this case are admitted, but not the conclusion—except in part, and here is where the ground

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pillon, *Psychologie de Hume*, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 28–31, above.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 22, above.

<sup>4</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 63, 64.

for debate really lies. A few words of explanation, however, will make the matter clear.

In writing a book, an author may be said to have, in general, two kinds of aims, intrinsic or universal, and extrinsic or individual. The intrinsic aim is the desire of the writer to advance knowledge, or promote truth, happiness, etc., by means of the principles or ideas expressed. The extrinsic, individual, or accidental aims are various, such as desire for money, fame, notoriety, public good-will, recreation, personal pleasure, etc. At one time the intrinsic aim may predominate, at another, the extrinsic. Hume, when writing each work, was undoubtedly influenced by both these classes of motives. And whether the intrinsic or the extrinsic aim predominated, when he was writing the *Inquiry*, cannot easily with positive certainty be determined. It is recognized, of course, by all competent critics, that in the *Treatise* the intrinsic aim predominates. But on the other hand, it may be conceded that in the *Inquiry* the extrinsic aims, formally at least, appear to preponderate.

The above admission will perhaps be regarded as a virtual surrender of the point in issue. Such, however, it is by no means intended to be. It is made merely for the sake of clearness and precision, constituting as it does a new basis for further discussion. Hume's primary aim in the *Treatise*, as has been repeatedly stated, was the presentation of a true theory of knowledge which would be of service to science, and which would help to overthrow rationalistic metaphysics. And his primary aim in the *Inquiry*, as has now been acknowledged, was, possibly, external conditions or individual circumstances. But from



these propositions to draw the conclusion that the aim of the Inquiry is essentially different from that of the Treatise, before examining at all the ground of the difference in the statement of these two aims, would not only be premature, but unjustifiable. The difference in aim, as above conceded, between the two works, is really but apparent, and admits of easy explanation. One of Hume's chief objects, in writing the Inquiry, was to call the attention of the public to the system of philosophy expounded in the Treatise. In a letter to Home, in 1742, he said that there was a demand for the Essays—Moral and Political. "I am . . . told that Dr. Butler has everywhere recommended then; . . . They may prove like dung with marl, and bring forward the rest of my philosophy, which is of a more durable, though of a harder and more stubborn nature."<sup>1</sup> Then he wrote the Inquiry, partly at least, for the purpose of helping the Essays to bring forward the Treatise. Hence this motive, although nominally extrinsic, is properly speaking intrinsic, since Hume's ultimate object was to carry the reader beyond the abridged account of his system to the complete exposition. And it must finally be concluded that Hume, when writing the Inquiry, was actuated more by intrinsic than by extrinsic motives; for in reality the former were paramount, although it may seem that formally the latter predominated.

Furthermore, it may be observed that the primary intrinsic aim of both works is exactly the same, viz., the presentation of a true theory of knowledge which might be of service to science,<sup>2</sup> and which would sub-

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Orr, *David Hume*, p. 85.

vert rationalistic metaphysics. That this aim is sought in a different way in each book is due to the different circumstances under which the books were written; and from these changes in circumstances there naturally resulted corresponding changes in the extrinsic aims. Hume gave a detailed and abstract account of his theory of knowledge in the *Treatise*, because he expected to establish a great philosophical reputation by means of the work. In this object he had apparently failed. Then he appealed from the tribunal to the forum, and presented in a popular manner the more easy and interesting parts of his system. Also, before publishing the *Treatise*, he withdrew some portions of it and modified others, in order that it might give "as little offence as possible," because he intended to present a copy to Dr. Butler, and hoped to obtain the applause of the learned world. The learned world, however, took but little notice. Hence, in the *Inquiry*, he restored these omitted portions, and expressed his views on religious questions more freely and less charitably. He thought thereby to rouse the learned world up a little, and after a while, indeed, he succeeded. Hume had now attained to a position such that hostility from theological quarters tended rather to advance his fame than to impede it. Besides, opposition from those whose good opinion one does not expect to win is often preferable to blank indifference.

In short, the inevitable conclusion is, that the intrinsic aim of both works is paramount, and also identical; but that the extrinsic aims are different. This is equivalent to saying that Hume's real object, in his philosophical writings, was ever the same; but



that the means which he adopted for the realization of this end varied at different times, according as the circumstances seemed to require. This view, it may be added, is in perfect accord with the character of the man. Though firm in his rights, steadfast in his principles, inflexible in his purposes, Hume was essentially a child of experience, ever willing to learn wisdom from the eternal laws of nature, and to conform, in accidentals, to the ways of the world. The distinction just made between Hume's intrinsic and extrinsic aims, although in itself simple enough, is one that has never before been made. Yet by means of it, the obscurity which has so long prevailed upon the question, whether the aim of the Inquiry is the same as that of the Treatise, is entirely removed.

§ 7. *Hume's Subject-matter.*—By subject-matter here is meant, not the particular topics which are dealt with in the Treatise and Inquiry, but rather Hume's philosophy, in its general characteristics, as it is presented in these two works. The philosophy of human nature, the science of man, or moral philosophy—all of which terms the author uses synonymously—comprises all the more important sciences which deal with human life or conduct. It is divided into theoretical philosophy, and practical;<sup>1</sup> or more specifically, into logic, morals, politics, and criticism.<sup>2</sup> Both these modes of classification are given in the Treatise, but only the former in the Inquiry, probably because in his later writings Hume did not intend to present his complete system. The science of man is, therefore, on the one hand, a psychological account

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 3; cf. II, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 303, 307.

of human knowledge, and on the other, a scientific treatment of motives and conduct, based on the theory of knowledge previously expounded. As already stated,<sup>1</sup> it is only the first of these divisions of the science that comes within the scope of this work.

The philosophy of human nature, as contained in the Treatise and Inquiry, rests on two fundamental principles, the sensational origin of ideas, and the representational theory of knowledge. Hume professes to establish the validity of the former principle by means of proofs;<sup>2</sup> but the latter he simply assumes, accepting it without question from preceding philosophers. He is thus, at the outset of his speculations at least, an empiricist, and an idealist. While he is a phenomenalist, he does not hold consistently to either the cruder or the finer form of the hypothesis of cosmothetic idealism. Occasionally he speaks as if knowledge were a *tertium quid* interposed between the mind and the external object, but again, as if it were merely a modification of the mind itself. He accepts implicitly Locke's definition of knowledge—the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. Hence he is equipped with what he regards as the only true criterion of certainty.<sup>3</sup> And since he assumes that the only objects of knowledge are states of consciousness, or impressions, ideas, and relations, he regards the science of man as a propaedeutic to all the other sciences. Of course, Hume does not always hold consistently to his assumption respecting the subjectivity of knowledge. He conforms himself,

<sup>1</sup> P. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 51, below.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I, pp. 311, 324, 371; IV, pp. 13, 51, 124, 125.

sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, to "the manner" of thinking and speaking with "the vulgar."<sup>1</sup> It may be further noted that the *Treatise* and *Inquiry* contain two very important, and at the same time different elements, one logical, the other psychological. The logical element is negative in tendency, and professes to prove, from an examination of the human understanding, that certain supposed kinds of knowledge—for example, metaphysics—are impossible. The psychological element, on the other hand, is positive in tendency, and undertakes to show, in a similar manner as before, that certain kinds of knowledge—for example, "a mental geography"—are possible. It is sufficient to remark here that both these elements, as well as the conflict between them, stand out more prominently in the *Treatise* than in the *Inquiry*. The significance of this difference will be dealt with later.<sup>2</sup>

There has been considerable discussion on the question, whether Hume was perfectly sincere in adopting from Locke and Berkeley the fundamental principles of his system. Mamiani<sup>3</sup> affirms that it is a great misconception to think that the author of the *Treatise* was serious. And Hamilton<sup>4</sup> asserts that Hume merely took up the conclusions of his predecessors, without indorsing them, and demonstrated the impossibility of establishing a philosophical system on a theory of pure empiricism. On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 491, 499; IV, p. 29 n.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 117-125; 127-132; 299-304.

<sup>3</sup> Simon, *Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge*, App. II, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> *Discussions*, p. 87.

Seth declares:<sup>1</sup> "There is no reason to doubt that [Hume] accepted in perfect good faith the fundamental positions from which he argued." The chief reasons for the former opinion are: (1) The absurdities into which Hume's reasoning sometimes led him; and (2) the numerous admissions which he made in the *Treatise* regarding the probable ineffectiveness of his arguments.<sup>2</sup> When these considerations, however, are weighed against the serious statements of the author in the introduction to his work, in the appendix, and in several letters,<sup>3</sup> there can be no doubt that the balance of evidence is in favor of the latter view.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it is well known that Reid held for many years, in perfectly good faith, essentially the same philosophical presuppositions as his skeptical antagonist. In a letter to Hume in 1763, he made the following significant admission:<sup>5</sup> "Your system appears to me not only coherent in all its parts, but likewise justly deduced from principles commonly received among philosophers." The subsequent remark of Seth,<sup>6</sup> that "in refusing to look upon Hume's system as a substantive or serious account of the nature of things, we may thus fairly claim to be taking him at his own valuation," is obviously open to criticism. We cannot regard one, nor a few of Hume's statements as a just valuation of his system of philosophy, without taking account of the

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Phil.*, p. 68; cf. Knight, *Hume*, p. 130; Mill, *Examination of Hamilton*, p. 554; Orr, *David Hume*, pp. 94-101.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 416, 461, 468, 544.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 31, 62, 65, 108.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Mind*, Vol. XI, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> *Scottish Phil.*, p. 70.



circumstances under which they were made, and without giving due consideration also to counter statements, when such, of a directly opposite nature and tendency, appear in his writings. Orr's estimation, on this question, is the true one. "There is abundant evidence," he says,<sup>1</sup> "that Hume regarded himself as an original discoverer in philosophy. He speaks repeatedly and complacently of 'my system.' He is confident that he has succeeded where others had failed in establishing the theory of human nature upon a just foundation."

§ 8. *Hume's Method*.—While the subject-matter of Hume's philosophy is but vaguely defined in the title of his chief work—*A Treatise of Human Nature*,—the method is clearly indicated—"An attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects." Nevertheless, different opinions have been expressed concerning it.<sup>2</sup> The view of Morris,<sup>3</sup> viz., that Hume's method is "the method of empirical psychology," derived from that of "physical inductive science," is substantially correct. For by experimental method Hume meant simply the scientific or inductive method, as this is now generally understood. It is no astonishing reflection to consider, he says,<sup>4</sup> "that the application of experimental philosophy to moral subjects should come after that to natural at the distance of above a whole century; since we find in fact, that there was about the same interval betwixt the origins

<sup>1</sup> *David Hume*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Long, *Ueber Hume's Lehre v. d. Ideen u. d. Substance*, p. 37; Hodgson, *The Philosophy of Reflection*, I, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *British Thought and Thinkers*, pp. 247, 253.

<sup>4</sup> P. 308; cf. IV, p. 174.

of these sciences; and that reckoning from THALES to SOCRATES, the space of time is nearly equal to that betwixt My Lord Bacon and some late philosophers in *England*,<sup>1</sup> who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing, and have engaged the attention, and have excited the curiosity of the public." He thinks it evident, "that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations."<sup>2</sup> Hume thus includes, under the term experimental method, observation of one's own mind, and observation of other minds, human and animal, in so far as the nature of mental states and processes can be subjectively perceived, interpreted by conduct, or disclosed by a study of physiology. He employs not merely the ordinary method of empirical psychology in its two aspects, subjective and objective, but also, to some extent, the comparative, genetic, and historical methods.<sup>3</sup> "The experimental method" is not to be confused, of course, with the method of experimentation as now employed in what is commonly called the "new psychology." For although Hume resorted at times to experiment, in order to confirm, or to illustrate his reasoning, and

<sup>1</sup> "Mr. *Locke*, my Lord *Shaftsbury*, Dr. *Mandeville*, Mr. *Hutchinson*, Dr. *Butler*, etc."—The space of time is not so nearly equal as Hume would represent, being from Thales (640 or 625) to Socrates (469) 171 (or 156) years, and from Bacon to Locke 71 years.

<sup>2</sup> P. 308.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I, pp. 364, 365, 468, 469.



declared that "all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits,"<sup>1</sup> he was after all but a worthy forerunner of the modern school of experimental psychologists.

In the Inquiry also, Hume emphasizes the experimental or scientific method. In the first section he says that "the only method of freeing learning" from abstruse metaphysical questions "is to inquire seriously into the nature of human understanding, and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects."<sup>2</sup> It will be noted, however, that, in addition to this statement, he asserts:<sup>3</sup> "Accurate and just reasoning is the only catholic remedy, fitted for all persons and all dispositions; and is alone able to subvert that abstruse philosophy and metaphysical jargon, which, being mixed up with popular superstition, renders it in a manner impenetrable to careless reasoners, and gives it the air of science and wisdom." Also in the twelfth section he affirms:<sup>4</sup> "To begin with clear and self-evident principles, to advance by timorous and sure steps, to review frequently our conclusions, and examine accurately all their consequences; though by these means we shall make both a slow and a short progress in our systems; are the only methods, by which we can ever hope to reach truth, and attain a perfect stability and certainty in our determinations." These last two passages, if interpreted with strict literalness, are inconsistent with Hume's former statements; for here he seems to abandon the inductive method of the scien-

<sup>1</sup> P. 498.<sup>2</sup> P. 9.<sup>3</sup> P. *Ibid.*<sup>4</sup> P. 123.

tists, and to adopt the deductive method of the philosophers. But the truth of the matter is that the "accurate and just reasoning" which is spoken of in the first passage, is conversant with matters of fact; and the "clear and self-evident principles" which are referred to in the second, are arrived at by means of induction. Although Hume, in both works,<sup>1</sup> seemed to make certain assumptions, and then reasoned from these according to the deductive method, yet in most cases, these assumptions are ultimately based, implicitly at least, on observation and experiment. In the Inquiry, the author did not discard, nor even subordinate his experimental method. For the result of his investigation is but a "mental geography, or delineation of the distinct parts and powers of the mind";<sup>2</sup> that is, a description of impressions and their copies, in their coexistence and succession. Likewise, without adopting any of the distinctive methods of experimental psychology, he introduced, as in the Treatise, a few experiments in the psychology of sensation, in order to prove, or to illustrate his arguments.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious, therefore, that Hume adopts the scientific method in both works. The deductive element of this method although perhaps not more generally employed in the later work than in the earlier, is more fully recognized in the first section of the Inquiry than in the introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature*. This change may be explained, in part, on psychological grounds; Hume at first expected to obtain extraordinary results from the use of his experimental

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, pp. 324, 326, 339; IV, pp. 13-15, 124, 125.

<sup>2</sup> P. 10; cf. pp. 15, 17.

Cf. IV, pp. 15, 124, 125.

method. But the change is probably due, in the main, to the difference in subject-matter of the two introductions; the one being an introduction to the science of man, the other an introduction to the theoretical part of the science. Hence, when the author afterwards takes up the discussion of practical philosophy, in the *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, he again emphasizes the importance of the inductive element. Regarding the nature of moral distinctions he asserts:<sup>1</sup> "As this is a question of fact, not of abstract science, we can only expect success, by following the experimental method, and deducing general maxims from a comparison of particular instances." Hume designated the *Treatise of Human Nature*, "An attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects," because in the work he employed the inductive method of the natural scientists, rather than the deductive method of the rationalistic philosophers. This method he followed in the *Inquiry* in a like manner, and substantially to the same extent as in the *Treatise*.

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 174.

## CHAPTER III.

### PERCEPTIONS: THEIR NATURE, AND CAUSE.

#### § 9. *The Nature and Classification of Perceptions.*

—Although Hume, in his psychology, adopted an atomistic view of mind, he did not carry out his analysis of the concrete phenomena of consciousness sufficiently far to enable him to distinguish between the purely psychological standpoint, and the epistemological. The ultimate elements of consciousness are, for him, not merely structural, but also functional. While together they constitute the stream of thought, each one separately has meaning, it knows. Failure to perceive the true significance of this fact has been one of the chief reasons why, on the one hand, the merits of Hume's system have seldom been fully realized, and why, on the other, the philosophy of human nature has been subjected to much irrelevant and inane criticism.

In the Treatise, all mental phenomena are called perceptions. These are the only objects of human knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Although conjoined, they are not connected, they all are distinct and separable; that is, perceptions generally do not exist separately, but they all may be thought of as existing separately, and consequently, may all exist as distinct and separate entities.<sup>2</sup> They are complex, or simple, according as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 311, 324, 327, 339, 371, 396, 408, 466, 483, 493, 503, 518, 523, 558.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 319, 326, 343, 370, 376, 381, 388, 456, 463, 495, 518, 540, 558, 559.



they can, or cannot be resolved into simpler elements.<sup>1</sup>

Perceptions form two general classes, impressions, and ideas. Impressions are always the first to appear in the mind. Of this Hume gives two proofs:<sup>2</sup> (1) "Every simple impression is attended with a correspondent idea, and every simple idea with a correspondent impression." (2) "Wherever by any accident the faculties, which give rise to any impression, are obstructed in their operations [or when the organs of sensation have never been put in action to produce a particular impression], not only the impressions are lost, but also their correspondent ideas." Hence it follows that all ideas are copies of impressions. Simple ideas differ from their corresponding impressions only through their less degree of force, vivacity, or liveliness.<sup>3</sup> But complex ideas differ also in some other—although not important—respects from the complex impressions from which they were derived; for instance, they are less perfect or complete, and their details are more confused.<sup>4</sup> With regard to force or liveliness, impressions and ideas merge into each other, or blend by imperceptible degrees, and consequently, at times, cannot be distinguished by introspection.<sup>5</sup> Impressions are of two kinds, those of sensation, and those of reflection. Impressions of sensation are those that arise "in the soul originally, from unknown causes," by means of the senses, also sensations of "heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain." Impressions of reflection "arise mostly

<sup>1</sup> P. 312; *cf.* p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> P. 314.

<sup>3</sup> *Cf.* pp. 311, 312, 327, 396, 452.

<sup>4</sup> P. 313; for an apparent contradiction, see II, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 311, 421.



from ideas," but sometimes directly from impressions of sensation.<sup>1</sup> They are the passions, emotions, desires, and aversions.<sup>2</sup> There are also two kinds of ideas, those of sensation, and those of reflection. These correspond, respectively, to the two kinds of impressions, being copies of them.<sup>3</sup> And since ideas may produce "the images of themselves in new ideas," there arise "secondary ideas, which are images of the primary."<sup>4</sup> Besides the classification of ideas into those of sensation and those of reflection, there is another division into those of memory, and those of imagination. Ideas of memory differ from those of imagination by their fixed order of appearance in the mind, and by their greater degree of force, vivacity, or liveliness.<sup>5</sup>

Probably through ignorance of continental philosophy, Hume mistakenly expresses the opinion that the distinction which he makes between impressions and ideas settles the controversy concerning innate ideas. Hence, he regards all impressions as innate, and all ideas as not innate.<sup>6</sup> In the case of different shades of color, for example, blue, he admits an exception to his general principle that impressions always precede their corresponding ideas, but thinks the instance is so singular that the general maxim need not be altered.<sup>7</sup> True, a similar exception may be observed in the degrees of every distinct class of sensations—as indeed Hume seems to imply,<sup>8</sup>—not only in the

<sup>1</sup> P. 311; *cf.* II, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 316, 317, 324, 340.

<sup>3</sup> P. 317.

<sup>4</sup> P. 316.

<sup>5</sup> P. 317, 318, 386, 387, 407, 409, 545.

<sup>6</sup> I, p. 316.

<sup>7</sup> I, p. 315.

<sup>8</sup> I, p. 315; *cf.* IV, p. 16.

sphere of color, but also in that of sound, taste, etc. These instances, however, strictly speaking, are only apparent exceptions to Hume's maxim. The different shades of blue are but different degrees of gray, or of brightness, mixed with the color tone. And ideas may be increased or diminished in quantity or in intensity by the imagination alone.

Of the three sections which originally dealt with these topics, only one appears in the Inquiry. The two entitled, "Division of the Subject," and "Of the Ideas of the Memory and Imagination" are entirely omitted. These omissions were doubtless made for the sake of brevity, and do not seem to be significant. Some of Hume's critics, however, have thought otherwise. Their views will be examined presently, after the points on which there is no controversy have been stated. As in the Treatise, all mental phenomena are called perceptions. These are the only objects of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Perceptions are conjoined, but not connected; they all may be regarded as distinct and separate existences.<sup>2</sup> Perceptions fall into two classes, impressions, and ideas. That impressions are the first to appear in the mind, the same two proofs are given as formerly.<sup>3</sup> Hence, all ideas are copied from impressions, and differ from them only in degree of force, vivacity, or liveliness.<sup>4</sup> The exception to the general rule,—that all simple ideas are copies of impressions,—is noted as before in the case of color.<sup>5</sup> And the controversy on innate ideas is supposed to be settled by the decision that all impressions are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 13, 15, 51, 52, 61, 64, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 27, 61, 90, 126, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 13, 14, 17; cf. II, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> P. 15.

<sup>5</sup> P. 16.

innate, and all ideas are not innate.<sup>1</sup> Thus far, there is complete agreement between both works; on some other questions there is ground for discussion.

With regard to impressions and ideas, Hume asserted in the Treatise that it is impossible at times to perceive, by means of introspection, the difference between them. "It sometimes happens, that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas."<sup>2</sup> Yet in the Inquiry he says:<sup>3</sup> "[The memory and imagination] may mimic or copy the perceptions of the senses; but they never can entirely reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment. . . . The most lively thought is still inferior to the dullest sensation." The contradiction here is only apparent. What Hume means, in the latter passage, is that, under normal conditions and as a general rule, "the most lively thought is still inferior to the dullest sensation." He grants that there are exceptions, for he asserts that when the mind is "disordered by disease or madness," impressions and ideas become "altogether undistinguishable."<sup>4</sup> In the Treatise he made several statements of exactly similar import.<sup>5</sup> The position of the earlier work, viz., that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish impressions from ideas by means of introspection, is psychologically correct. And Hume would undoubtedly have expressed the same view in the Inquiry, had he treated the subject fully, or had he written solely for the philosophers and not also for the public.

Brede<sup>6</sup> states that the distinction between simple

<sup>1</sup> P. 17n.

<sup>2</sup> P. 311; cf. p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> P. 13.

<sup>4</sup> P. 13; cf. pp. 57, 124.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 311, 421.

<sup>6</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 30.

and complex ideas is omitted in the later work, and thinks that this omission is due to Hume's desire not to emphasize the separateness of simple ideas, since soon after writing the *Treatise* the author discovered that he could not unite the separate ideas so easily as he formerly thought he could. It may be admitted that simple and complex ideas are not defined in the *Inquiry*. But the cause assigned by Brede is evidently not the real one. For Hume not only still holds that all perceptions are distinct and separate, and may be thought of as separate existences,<sup>1</sup> but he speaks of simple and complex ideas in a manner implying the same distinction as that made in the *Treatise*. Incidentally, he remarks:<sup>2</sup> "Complex ideas may, perhaps, be well known by definition, which is nothing but an enumeration of those parts or simple ideas, that compose them." The difference here recognized, between simple and complex ideas, was not pointed out with the same fulness and clearness of detail as in the earlier work, because the author now aimed particularly at conciseness of statement. The omission is of no special significance.

Selby-Bigge<sup>3</sup> asserts that, in the *Inquiry*, the distinction between "impressions of sensation and reflection" is omitted. But he neglects to mention that it is repeatedly assumed. For instance, in section vii Hume states:<sup>4</sup> "It seems a proposition, which will not admit of much dispute, that all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions, or, in other words, that it is impossible for us to *think* of any-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, p. 559; IV, pp. 27, 61, 90, 134.

<sup>2</sup> P. 51; cf. pp. 14, 15, 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xii.

<sup>4</sup> P. 51; cf. pp. 17, 38 n., 40, 52, 53, 61, 64, 65.



thing, which we have not antecedently *felt*, either by our external or internal senses." He implies, of course, that the impressions and ideas of the internal senses are those of reflection, as distinguished from sensation. As he said in the earlier work,<sup>1</sup> "the idea of necessity" must be derived "from some internal impression, or impression of reflection." In fact, Hume speaks of impressions and ideas of reflection in the same manner, and seems to attribute to them the same origin in both books. Thus in the *Treatise* he says:<sup>2</sup> "This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impression of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it." And in the *Inquiry* he asserts:<sup>3</sup> "[The idea of power] is an idea of reflection, since it arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind." Explicit treatment of impressions of reflection was omitted, in the later work, simply for the sake of brevity, as was explicit mention of them often omitted in the earlier, for the same reason. "I shall only observe before I proceed any farther," remarked Hume in the *Treatise*,<sup>4</sup> "that though the idea of cause and effect be derived from the impressions of reflection as well as from those of sensation, yet for brevity's sake, I commonly mention only the latter as the origin of these ideas; though I desire that whatever I say of them may also extend to the former." It was evidently for a similar reason that the classification of primary and secondary ideas was not given in the *Inquiry*. For in the *Treatise* Hume said that the limitation of his maxim of "the priority

<sup>1</sup> P. 460.<sup>2</sup> P. 317.<sup>3</sup> P. 53.<sup>4</sup> P. 380.



of impressions to ideas," arising from the recognition of the relation of secondary ideas to primary, was "an explanation" of his general principle, rather than "an exception" to it.<sup>1</sup>

As several writers<sup>2</sup> have pointed out, the distinction between the ideas of memory, and those of imagination is omitted in the later work. When dealing with this subject Hume is not only indefinite, but also inconsistent. In the Treatise ideas of memory are differentiated from those of imagination by two characteristics:<sup>3</sup> their fixed order, and their greater force. At first, the former<sup>4</sup> characteristic is regarded as being the more important, but afterwards, the latter.<sup>5</sup> Again, not only may ideas of memory be so vivid, that they resemble impressions, and are called impressions of memory;<sup>6</sup> but they may also degenerate to such a degree as to become indistinguishable from ideas of imagination.<sup>7</sup> And on the other hand, ideas of imagination, through repetition, may become so strong and vivid that they are mistaken for ideas of memory.<sup>8</sup> Grimm's treatment of this question is exceedingly plausible, and is probably the best that has been given. His argument, in brief, is as follows:<sup>9</sup> In the early part of the Treatise, Hume regards memory as something self-dependent and entirely different from imagination. But in a later section,

<sup>1</sup> P. 316.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pfeleiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 119 n.; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 31; Selby-Bigge, *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xii.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 317, 318.

<sup>4</sup> P. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 386, 387, 545.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 384, 385, 387, 407.

<sup>7</sup> P. 387.

<sup>8</sup> Pp. 387, 416, 421.

<sup>9</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, pp. 452, 453.

when he enters more deeply into the nature of knowledge of experience, and particularly of the causal connection of things, he develops those defects through which memory is almost deposed from its peculiar position, so that it differs from imagination only in degree. On account of these defects, the distinction between the two faculties, at first somewhat strongly emphasized, loses its chief worth. That may be the cause, therefore, why Hume in his second work neglects to enter upon a discussion of this subject. The facts are essentially as Grimm states them, and his conclusion is not entirely without justification. It is certain that Hume, when writing the *Inquiry*, was influenced by the desire to avoid the contradictions in the earlier work, and that may have been a reason why he neglected to give a full treatment of the ideas of memory and imagination. And it is probable that he perceived the impossibility of precisely distinguishing between these two classes of ideas, and therefore refrained from making the attempt within the compass of a popular essay. But the chief reason for these omissions was undoubtedly the author's desire to secure conciseness of statement; since he implicitly distinguishes between the ideas of memory and those of imagination, and assigns to the former in contrast with the latter, the chief functions ascribed to them in the *Treatise*. "Whenever any object is presented to the memory or senses," he says,<sup>1</sup> "it immediately, by the force of custom, carries the imagination to conceive that object, which is usually conjoined to it; and this conception is attended with a feeling or sentiment, different from the loose

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 41; cf. pp. 13, 39, 43.

reveries of the fancy.” If Hume had revised, or rewritten the earlier work, instead of only portions of it, all the distinctions formerly made between memory and imagination would, in all probability, have been expressed in the later. Even the inconsistencies that appear in the fuller statement are verbal, rather than real. With care they might have been avoided. They cannot, therefore, fairly be regarded as having any specific influence on the author when he wrote the Inquiry.

Concerning the question of the nature and classification of perceptions, it is evident that the position of the two works is practically the same. On all the more important topics there is perfect agreement. On minor points, of course, owing chiefly to omissions in the Inquiry, there are some differences observable. But these are differences of treatment, not of doctrine. Since the distinctions which were explicitly made, in the earlier work, are either reasserted, or implied in the later, the omissions do not seem to have any significant bearing on Hume’s philosophical position.

§ 10. *The Cause of Perceptions.*—The treatment of the cause of perceptions is rendered somewhat difficult, owing to the ambiguity attaching to the word cause. True, it was one of Hume’s main contentions, one of the theses which he especially aimed to prove, that cause means only invariable antecedent.<sup>1</sup> “Thus upon the whole we may infer,” he declares,<sup>2</sup> “that when we talk of any being, whether of a superior or inferior nature, as endowed with a power or force, proportioned to any effect; when we speak of a neces-

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 375 and ff.; IV, pp. 51 and ff.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 457; cf. IV, pp. 60, 61.

sary connection betwixt objects, and suppose, that this connection depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endowed; in all these expressions, *so applied*, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas." Hume, however, was obliged to use the language at his disposal, and not infrequently he speaks of cause as if implying by it producing power. Yet if the instances in which he seems to use cause in this sense be examined, it will often be discovered that the real meaning of the word is but invariable antecedent.<sup>1</sup> Having defined what he meant by cause, he was at liberty to employ the terms he found most convenient for his purpose. No doubt, at times he found it convenient to use cause in an improper sense, perhaps realized that it was impossible to avoid such use. But in these instances he is inconsistent, and the inconsistency must be acknowledged.

Concerning the cause of perceptions, that is, their invariable antecedent, Hume gives two different accounts.<sup>2</sup> These may be called the epistemological explanation, and the physiological, viz., (1) What is the cause of perceptions according to the philosophy of human nature? (2) What is the cause of perceptions according to natural science? The two questions require separate treatment.

I. What is the cause of perceptions according to Hume's system of philosophy, the epistemological explanation? In the Treatise, the author says that the impressions of sense arise "in the soul originally,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, pp. 316, 317, 340, 343, 385; IV, pp. 16, 17, 60, 64, 125.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 313, 314.



from unknown causes." When the impressions disappear, they leave their traces or copies; these are ideas of sensation—primary ideas of sensation, from which, in turn, may arise secondary ideas. Impressions and ideas of sensation also give rise to impressions of reflection—passions, desires, and emotions. These latter "are copied by the memory and imagination and become ideas [of reflection]; which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas."<sup>1</sup> The order of genesis then is as follows: impressions of sensation, ideas of sensation, impressions of reflection, and ideas of reflection; impressions of sensation being the cause of ideas of sensation—sometimes also the cause of impressions of reflection,<sup>2</sup>—ideas of sensation the cause of impressions of reflection, and impressions of reflection the cause of ideas of reflection.

Although the greater part of this account is omitted in the Inquiry, Hume's position may easily be ascertained. As in the Treatise, he distinguishes between impressions and ideas, and states repeatedly that all ideas arise from the external or internal senses, that is, from sensation and reflection.<sup>3</sup> Thus there is implied the same classification of perceptions as before; and the impressions of sensation and reflection are, respectively, the cause of their corresponding ideas. True, it is not explicitly stated that the impressions of reflection, in every instance, arise from impressions or ideas of sensation. Grimm<sup>4</sup> suggests that perhaps Hume wished thus to escape one of the contradictions involved in the earlier work, viz., that of making im-

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. I, p. 317; II, pp. 75, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 14, 15, 17, 40, 51, 52, 53, 61, 64, 65.

<sup>4</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, p. 589.



pressions of reflection causally dependent on impressions of sensation, instead of merely successive in time. This reason, however, does not seem to have been the real one. For according to Hume, causally dependent simply means invariably consequent. In this sense, Hume again, in the second book of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, regarded impressions of reflection, which he called secondary, as dependent on impressions or ideas of sensation, which he called original.<sup>1</sup> And in a similar manner, in the *Inquiry*, he not only still holds that ideas are dependent on impressions—as Grimm indeed admits,<sup>2</sup>—but also that the impression of reflection from which the idea of cause is derived is dependent on impressions of sensation.<sup>3</sup> It seems as if the omission in the *Inquiry* was due to the author's desire for brevity of treatment, rather than to any change of view, or endeavor to avoid contradictions.

Thus far, there has been assigned no cause of the impressions of sensation. Concerning these, in a note to the first section of the *Treatise*, Hume asserts:<sup>4</sup> “By the term of impression I would not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves.” To this statement there is nothing corresponding in the *Inquiry*, except a note on innate ideas, which contains the following sentence:<sup>5</sup> “But admitting these terms, *impressions* and *ideas*, in the sense above explained, and understanding by *innate*, what is original or copied from no precedent percep-

<sup>1</sup> II, pp. 75, 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, p. 559.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 53, 62, 65; Cf. pp. 14, 15, 17, 40, 51, 52, 61, 64.

<sup>4</sup> P. 312.

<sup>5</sup> P. 17.

tion, then may we assert, that all our impressions are innate, and our ideas not innate." Thus he implies that impressions are the cause of ideas, but concerning the cause of impressions he has nothing now to say. In the second section of the *Treatise*, however, he declares:<sup>1</sup> "The examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral; and therefore shall not at present be entered upon." In the *Inquiry*, there is nothing corresponding to this statement. The sentence just quoted seems to imply that Hume will afterwards deal with impressions. But as this investigation "belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral," the explanation must be physiological rather than epistemological. Hence arises the second question.

II. What is the cause of perceptions according to natural science, the physiological explanation? As already stated, thus far, in neither work, does Hume assign any cause of the impressions of sensation. In the *Treatise*, he remarked that the examination of the impressions of sense belonged more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral, and therefore should not at present be entered upon. Consequently, when he afterwards gives a physiological explanation of perceptions, it might naturally be supposed that this explanation applies only to impressions. The treatment, however, is too general to bear this interpretation. For when he discusses the subject in Part II, and again in Part IV, he speaks, not of the cause of impressions, but of the cause of perceptions, including the cause of ideas as well as that of impressions. In the *Treatise* are such passages as the following:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 317.

<sup>2</sup> P. 365.

“I shall therefore observe, that as the mind is endowed with a power of exciting any idea it pleases; whenever it dispatches the spirits into that region of the brain, in which the idea is placed; these spirits always excite the idea, when they run precisely into the proper traces, and rummage that cell, which belongs to the idea.”—“When we press one eye with a finger, we immediately perceive all the objects to become double. . . . But as we do not attribute a continued existence to both these perceptions, and as they are both of the same nature, we clearly perceive, that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits.”<sup>1</sup> These quotations clearly indicate that the physiological cause of perceptions is cerebral and neural processes—including, of course, the movements of animal spirits. Cerebral and neural processes are the invariable antecedents of perceptions. In still another passage Hume declares:<sup>2</sup> “I would answer, that we must separate the question concerning the substance of the mind from that concerning the cause of its thought; and that confining ourselves to the latter question we find by the comparing their ideas, that thought and motion are different from each other, and by experience, that they are constantly united; which being all the circumstances, that enter into the idea of cause and effect, when applied to the operations of matter, we may certainly conclude, that motion may be, and actually is, the cause of thought and perception.” It is true, he admits that this conclusion “evidently gives the advantage to the materialists above their antagonists.”<sup>3</sup> But the ad-

<sup>1</sup> P. 498.<sup>2</sup> P. 530.<sup>3</sup> P. 532.

mission, standing as it does against several contrary statements,<sup>1</sup> has no philosophical importance.<sup>2</sup> It probably occurred through the author's over zeal in his opposition to the "spiritualists" with their "metaphysical entities."

Although, in the Inquiry, there is no definite answer given to the question concerning the physiological cause of perceptions, there are some statements which contain, at least, a partial answer. In section ii,<sup>3</sup> Hume admits that, when the mind is "disordered by disease or madness," ideas may "arrive at such a pitch of vivacity" that they are indistinguishable from impressions; and in section xii,<sup>4</sup> he implies that many "perceptions arise not from any thing external," but from the condition of the organism, or from a certain state of the brain or nerves. These and other passages<sup>5</sup> of like import clearly mean that perceptions are caused, that is, invariably preceded, by cerebral and neural processes, or by movements of the animal spirits.<sup>6</sup> Statements confirming this conclusion may be found in Hume's other writings. In the posthumous work, the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, for example, Philo asks:<sup>7</sup> "What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe?"

The conclusion now reached, viz., that the physiological cause of perceptions is cerebral processes, seems

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 385, 546.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 532, 533.

<sup>3</sup> P. 13.

<sup>4</sup> P. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. pp. 15, 55, 57, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Huxley, *Hume*, pp. 76, 78; Porter, *Science and Sentiment*, p. 311.

<sup>7</sup> II, p. 396.



to be inconsistent with a statement made in the second section of the Treatise, to the effect that impressions of sense arise in the soul originally "from unknown causes." The explanation, however, is not difficult. In his account of the physiological cause of perceptions, Hume has reference to the *immediate* cause; hence his answer, neural and cerebral processes. But when the further question is raised, what is the *ultimate* cause of perceptions? he has no answer to give. True this question, from the philosophical point of view, is much more interesting than the previous one. But Hume does not attempt to answer it. As he has just said, impressions of sense arise in the soul originally from unknown causes; that is, the original, or ultimate cause of impressions is unknown. In another passage also, he declares:<sup>1</sup> "As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produced by the creative power of the mind, or are derived from the author of our being."

In the Inquiry, almost exactly the same position is assumed in the first part of the twelfth section. "By what argument can it be proved," asks Hume,<sup>2</sup> "that the perceptions of the mind must be caused by external objects, . . . and could not arise either from the energy of the mind itself, or from the suggestion of some invisible and unknown spirit, or from some other cause still more unknown to us?" It is true that, in the later work, the author does not draw a distinction between the question of the immediate cause,

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 385.

<sup>2</sup> P. 125.



and that of the ultimate cause of impressions. Nevertheless, this distinction seems to be implied, when he admits that some impressions are produced by neural and cerebral processes, or by the condition of the bodily organism;<sup>1</sup> and when, at the same time, he affirms that it is impossible to tell from whence "the perceptions of the mind" arise.<sup>2</sup> Thus Hume leaves the metaphysical question of realism and idealism undetermined, and asserts that it is indeterminable. It is a matter which lies wholly beyond the power of human understanding. This is the position of the Inquiry as well as of the Treatise.

Before concluding the discussion, some reference should be made to the opinions that have been expressed, by interpreters of Hume, regarding his doctrine of the cause of perceptions. Huxley<sup>3</sup> states that Hume "fully adopted the conclusion to which all that we know of psychological physiology tends, that the origin of the elements of consciousness, no less than that of all its other states, is to be sought in bodily changes, the seat of which can only be placed in the brain." At the same time, he asserts that "Hume is not quite consistent with himself" respecting the origin of impressions of sensation.<sup>4</sup> Knight takes a somewhat similar view, but he is more reserved in the expression of it. He says:<sup>5</sup> "[Hume] suggests that, *for all that we know to the contrary*, material changes may be sufficient to produce mental ones, but he does not teach this dogmatically." He also asserts that Hume is inconsistent in his treatment of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 15, 55, 57, 124.

<sup>2</sup> P. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Hume, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> Hume, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Hume, pp. 143, 144; cf. Porter, *Science and Sentiment*, p. 311.

the subject, "both in the Treatise, and the Inquiry." Webb declares:<sup>1</sup> "But though in his psychology [Hume] refuses to recognise either the conceptions or the principles of efficient causation and essential substance, yet in his metaphysics he finds himself compelled to admit that our impressions have a cause, and thus to recognize with Kant the existence of a non-sensuous cause of our sensations." And Seth<sup>2</sup> affirms that, "Hume cuts short the question of the cause of our impressions as a transcendental inquiry." Here are several different, and even contradictory statements. One represents that, according to Hume, the cause of perceptions is cerebral processes; another that the author, in both works, contradicts himself; a third that the cause of impressions is a noumenal existence; and still another that the cause of impressions, being a transcendental question, is not investigated. The inconsistencies in these divergent views are accounted for, and at the same time in large measure removed, by the interpretation that has just been given. It is manifest that Hume recognizes a distinction between the immediate cause of perceptions and the ultimate cause. He distinguishes between the immediate and the ultimate causes of phenomena.<sup>3</sup> He says of his philosophy, that it "pretends only to explain the nature and causes of our perceptions, or impressions and ideas."<sup>4</sup> He states that the cause of perceptions is motion, movements in the brain or nerves, or of the animal spirits.<sup>5</sup> But the "ultimate

<sup>1</sup> *Veil of Isis*, p. 120; cf. pp. 87, 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Scottish Phil.*, pp. 46, 48; cf. I, p. 161; Aikins, *Phil. of Hume*, p. 44; Speckmann, *Hume's metaphysische Skepsis*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I, p. 546; IV, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> P. 368.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. I, pp. 364, 365, 498, 515.

cause" of impressions he regards as "perfectly inexplicable by human reason." That is to say, the cause assigned is the immediate cause, and the cause unassignable is the ultimate one.

§ 11. *Conclusion.*—The more important results of the discussion may be summarized as follows:

1. The Nature and Classification of Perceptions. According to Hume's philosophy, perceptions are the only objects of knowledge. All perceptions may be thought of as distinct and separate existences. They are of two kinds, impressions, and ideas. Impressions of sensation are the original elements, or ultimate facts of human experience. From these are derived the ideas of sensation. Impressions and ideas of sensation give rise to impressions of reflection, from which in turn are derived the ideas of reflection. On all these points the position of both works is the same, except that, in the *Inquiry*, it is not expressly stated—although evidently implied—that all impressions of reflection are ultimately dependent on impressions of sensation. In the *Treatise*, it is stated that "as our ideas are images of our impressions, so we can form secondary ideas, which are images of the primary."<sup>1</sup> But this limitation of his maxim of the priority of impressions to ideas, Hume says, "is not, properly speaking, an exception to the rule so much as an explanation of it." The reference, naturally, is omitted in the briefer work.

The classification of ideas given in the *Treatise* into simple, and complex, is omitted in the *Inquiry*, but the distinction between them is still plainly indicated.<sup>2</sup> The classification of ideas into those of

<sup>1</sup> P. 316.

<sup>2</sup> P. 51.

memory, and those of imagination is also omitted in the later work. Yet one of the two distinctive characteristics of ideas of memory, viz., force and vivacity, is expressly attributed to them; and the other, fixed order, is implied.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Cause of Perceptions. (1) The cause of perceptions, according to the principles of the philosophy of human nature, that is, the epistemological cause, has already been treated under "classification." (2) The physical cause of perceptions is motion in the nerves and brain, or of the animal spirits. On this point the position of the Inquiry seems to be identical with that of the Treatise. Concerning the ultimate cause of perceptions, Hume has no explanation to offer; in both the Treatise and Inquiry, he regards it as unknown and unknowable.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 17, 41, 43.



## CHAPTER IV.

### ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS AND RESULT—COMPLEX IDEAS.

§ 12. *Association of Ideas*.—After it had been demonstrated by experimental psychology that there is not a special faculty of imagination, strictly speaking but rather that there are several faculties—that instead of imagination, there are imaginations,—it was natural to infer that Hume's mind was decidedly of the visualizing type.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion, supported as it is by strong internal evidence, scarcely admits of doubt. Hume originated his system of philosophy at a very early age; and as Galton<sup>2</sup> has shown, in youth the visualizing imagination is most vivid. The imaging activities of mind play a large part in the philosophy of human nature. Thus, all the objects of knowledge are impressions and their copies. "Whatever is clearly conceived may exist; and whatever is clearly conceived, after any manner, may exist after the same manner. . . . Again, every thing which is different, is distinguishable, and every thing which is distinguishable, is separable by the imagination."<sup>3</sup> It is in his treatment of relations and general ideas, however, that Hume's visualizing tendencies become most conspicuous. So long as he has to deal only with sense impressions, or with ideas possessing a content that may be pictured, he has comparatively little difficulty. But when he treats a subject-matter that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fraser, *Am. J. of Psy.*, Vol. IV, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Mind*, Vol. V, p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 518; cf. IV, p. 31.



cannot be spread out before the eye of imagination, he involves himself in obscurities or contradictions. He regards relations, at one time, as qualities of ideas,<sup>1</sup> at another, as complex ideas,<sup>2</sup> then as acts of comparison,<sup>3</sup> and again as results of comparison.<sup>4</sup> Philosophers had concluded that the general idea man could represent men of all sizes only "by representing no particular one at all."<sup>5</sup> But Hume, carried away by his visualizing imagination, professes to prove, "that it is utterly impossible to conceive any quantity or quality, without forming a precise notion of its degrees."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, he concludes that abstract or general ideas are "in themselves, individual, however they may become general in their representation. *The image in the mind*<sup>7</sup> is only that of a particular object, though the application of it in our reasoning be the same, as if it were universal."<sup>8</sup>

Since Hume assumes that all perceptions are "distinct and separable," and may exist separately, every distinct perception being "a distinct existence,"<sup>9</sup> one of his first problems is to show the manner in which ideas are connected, in order that knowledge may be possible. In the Treatise, this connection is partially effected by the faculty of memory, which produces an "inseparable connection,"<sup>10</sup> or rather a very strong relation,<sup>11</sup> between ideas remembered. But there are also the ideas of imagination to be related. If these were "entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone would join them"; and the result would not be

<sup>1</sup>I, pp. 319, 322.

<sup>3</sup>I, p. 463.

<sup>5</sup>I, p. 326.

<sup>7</sup>The italics are mine.

<sup>9</sup>*Cf.* I, pp. 319, 326, 518.

<sup>2</sup>I, pp. 321, 322.

<sup>4</sup>I, pp. 352, 372.

<sup>6</sup>I, pp. 326, 327.

<sup>8</sup>I, p. 328.

<sup>10</sup>P. 321.

<sup>11</sup>*Cf.* p. 540.

knowledge, but chaos.<sup>1</sup> Confusion happily is averted by means of certain principles of association, which relate ideas according to general laws in a regular and orderly manner. The principles of connection, or laws of association, are three: resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect.<sup>2</sup>

Several critics<sup>3</sup> have pointed out that Hume should have recognized only two fundamental principles of association of ideas, since he later reduced causation to a species of contiguity. It seems, however, that the author of the *Treatise*, in the section on association, makes causation coordinate with resemblance and contiguity only provisionally; for he asserts:<sup>4</sup> "As to the connection, which is made by the relation of *cause and effect*, we shall have reason afterwards to examine it to the bottom, and therefore shall not at present insist upon it." He arrives at his classification inductively. And while he admits that resemblance, contiguity, and causation are "neither the *infallible* nor the *sole* causes" of union among ideas, he maintains that they are "the only *general* principles."<sup>5</sup>

Hume, moreover, offers a partial explanation of the laws of association. He calls them "natural relations" in contradistinction to "philosophical relations."<sup>6</sup> He also calls them "qualities" of ideas. And these qualities of ideas, or uniting principles, he regards as "a gentle force," or "kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have

<sup>1</sup> P. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. II, pp. 82, 101.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. McCosh, *Agnosticism of Hume and Huxley*, p. 18; Brown, *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, II, p. 229; Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, I, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> P. 320; cf. I, p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> P. 393.

<sup>6</sup> P. 322.

as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to show itself in as many and as various forms."<sup>1</sup> In Part I<sup>2</sup> of the Treatise, he asserts that the cause of association must be resolved into "*original* qualities of human nature," which he does not pretend to explain. But in Part II,<sup>3</sup> he alleges that a physiological explanation of the laws of association might be given, by showing "why upon our conception of any idea, the animal spirits run into all the contiguous traces [or cells, in the brain], and rouse up the other ideas, that are related to it." It may be noted that, in the opinion of Uhl,<sup>4</sup> Hume is here speaking ironically, perhaps with reference to Descartes. On the other hand, according to Morris,<sup>5</sup> he professes his utter inability to explain the laws of association. The former view is undoubtedly incorrect; but the latter is true, in the sense that Hume professes his inability to give an ultimate explanation of these laws; he lays claim only to suggest a physiological explanation.<sup>6</sup>

In the early editions of the Inquiry, the treatment of association of ideas consisted largely of popular illustrations. These were gradually relegated to footnotes, until the discussion in the text became exceedingly brief. It is now simpler, as well as briefer than that in the Treatise.<sup>7</sup> As before, Hume recognizes three principles of connection among ideas, re-

<sup>1</sup> P. 321.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 364, 365.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Grundzüge d. Psychologie D. H.*, I, p. 29 n.; cf. Pfeleiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 121 n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *British Thought and Thinkers*, p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Riehl, *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, p. 153; Lange, *History of Materialism*, II, p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, p. 286.

semblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. He admits it may be difficult to prove satisfactorily "that this enumeration is complete," but thinks that "the more instances we examine, and the more care we employ, the more assurance shall we acquire, that the enumeration, which we form from the whole, is complete and entire."<sup>1</sup> Since a separate account of memory is not given in the Inquiry, Hume does not explicitly represent that faculty as a principle of union among ideas; yet he does so implicitly.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in conformity with his treatment of perceptions,<sup>3</sup> he does not now offer a physiological explanation of the principles of association. With the exception of the differences just indicated, which are but of minor importance and are easily accounted for, the position of both works on the subject of association of ideas is exactly the same.

An apparent inconsistency in the two account may here perhaps be noted. In the Treatise<sup>4</sup> Hume said that resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect were not the "*sole causes*" of union among ideas; but in the Inquiry,<sup>5</sup> he says that these are "the only three principles of connection." The discrepancy is only verbal. What the author means, in the later work, is that resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect are the only three *fundamental* principles of association. For he immediately adds, in a foot-note,<sup>6</sup> that "contrast or contrariety is also a connection among ideas." But contrast he does not regard as a law or principle of association, since he thinks it may be considered as "a mixture of causation and resemblance."

<sup>1</sup> P. 18.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 17, 41, 43.<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 65-67 above.<sup>4</sup> P. 393.<sup>5</sup> P. 18.<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



Selby-Bigge<sup>1</sup> asserts that, "in the treatment of association," in the Inquiry, "little is said about causation as a principle of association"; while on the other hand, Pfeiderer<sup>2</sup> affirms that Hume's excursion on association, in the later work, is too prolix. Both statements are substantially correct. At the conclusion of the discussion, in the Treatise, Hume remarked:<sup>3</sup> "Nothing is more requisite for a true philosopher, than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes, and having established any doctrine on a sufficient number of experiments, rest contented with that, when he sees a farther examination would lead him into obscure and uncertain speculations. In that case his inquiry would be much better employed in examining the effects than the causes of his principle." Naturally, therefore, in the briefer work, after stating that the enumeration of the laws of association was "complete and entire," he continued:<sup>4</sup> "Instead of entering into a detail of this kind, which would lead into many useless subtilties, we shall consider some of the effects of this connection upon the passions and imagination; where we may open a field of speculation more entertaining, and perhaps more instructive, than the other." Then followed several illustrations of his principles, as applied in history, poetry, and the drama. This excursion within the field of literature was transferred, in course of time, to foot-notes. Hence, in the early editions of the Inquiry the treatment of association is prolix, but in the later editions—omitting the foot-notes—it is exceedingly brief. With regard to Selby-

<sup>1</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 120 n.

<sup>3</sup> P. 321.

<sup>4</sup> P. 19 n.



Bigge's assertion that little is said, in the later work, about causation "as a principle of association," it may be noted that the treatment of causation, as an associating principle, was fuller in all the earlier editions of the *Inquiry* than that given in the *Treatise*. As Hume, in the earlier work, stated that causation was "the most extensive"<sup>1</sup> of the three principles of association, so in all the editions of the later work, prior to that of 1777, he affirmed that the relation of cause and effect was "the strongest" of all the relations, and "the most instructive."<sup>2</sup> The changes of treatment, in the *Inquiry*, were undoubtedly due to the author's desire to present his theory of knowledge in a popular manner; and the omissions must be attributed to his wish for brevity of statement.

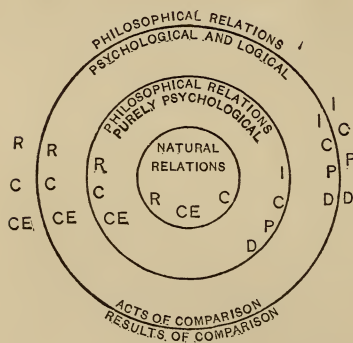
§ 13. *Complex Ideas*.—The products of the laws of association, or of the natural relations are complex ideas. These are philosophical relations, modes, and substances.<sup>3</sup> They may be treated in their order.

I. *Philosophical Relations*. It was remarked in the last chapter<sup>4</sup> that Hume nowhere distinguishes between the standpoint of psychology, and that of epistemology. It may be noted now that he fails in like manner, in his treatment of relations, to distinguish between purely logical, and psychological processes. This is another source of ambiguity that must constantly be kept in mind. In the earlier work, the section dealing with relations is exceedingly obscure, and the several scattered references tend rather to befog the reader than to illumine the subject. Hume states that complex ideas are "the effects" of the natural relations. Soon, however, for natural

<sup>1</sup> P. 320.<sup>2</sup> P. 19 n.<sup>3</sup> I, p. 321.<sup>4</sup> P. 50.

relations he substitutes "principles of union or cohesion" among simple ideas.<sup>1</sup> And principles of union, or "qualities" of objects he afterwards speaks of as philosophical relations.<sup>2</sup> Philosophical relations are distinguished from natural relations in the following manner.<sup>3</sup> A natural relation is "that quality, by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination, and the one naturally introduces the other." A philosophical relation is "that particular circumstance, in which, even upon the arbitrary union of two ideas in the fancy, we may think proper to compare them." It will be observed that these definitions differ from each other only in degree. But Hume, in his treatment of philosophical relations, does not confine himself strictly to his definition. He speaks of philosophical relation, not only as the source of comparison, but also as the result of comparison,<sup>4</sup> and finally, as the act of comparison.<sup>5</sup> Hence there appear now to be three kinds of philosophical relations. And as one of these, the results of comparison,

is afterwards subdivided,<sup>6</sup> there are five sorts of relations in all,—four of philosophical relations, and one of natural. The matter will become clear by presenting this classification in the schematic form of three concentric circles.<sup>7</sup> In the inner circle are the natural relations, resem-

<sup>1</sup> P. 321.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 322, 323.<sup>3</sup> P. 322.<sup>4</sup> Pp. 322, 323, 372. <sup>5</sup> P. 463.<sup>6</sup> P. 372.<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pfleiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 128.

blance, contiguity, and cause and effect. As these diminish in strength, so that they do not produce associations naturally, they pass to the middle circle and become qualities, or "particular circumstances" in respect of which two ideas may be compared.<sup>1</sup> Here they are joined by four other "particular circumstances," identity, contrariety, proportions in quantity, and degrees of quality. These seven "particular circumstances" are the philosophical relations that are purely psychological. They are "the sources" of all other philosophical relations,<sup>2</sup> viz., those which are logical as well as psychological. This latter class is represented by the outer circle. It contains two subclasses, acts of comparison,<sup>3</sup> and results of comparison,<sup>4</sup> corresponding respectively to the concave and convex sides of the circle. Finally, there is a twofold division of the results of comparison:<sup>5</sup> (1) those that "may be changed without any change in the ideas," viz., identity, contiguity, and causation; (2) those that depend entirely upon the ideas compared, viz., resemblance, contrariety, proportions in quantity, and degrees of quality.

It is not implied, of course, that Hume had the above classification of relations clearly in mind. Nor is it probable that, even if he had, he would have stated it explicitly. He did not possess the schematizing faculty so characteristic of Kant. But he was endowed with profound psychological insight, and an extraordinary degree of sound common sense, which enabled him to seize the chief features of his problem, and thus to treat of relation in its most important stages of development. True, he did not do this quite consistently. The contradictions, however, are

<sup>1</sup> P. 322. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> P. 463. <sup>4</sup> Pp. 322, 372. <sup>5</sup> P. 372.

mostly verbal, apparent rather than real. And when these are removed, it must be conceded that his psychology of relations contains practically all the essential elements that are yet to be met with in the most scientific treatment of that subject.

Hume's doctrine of relations has often been criticised on the ground that ideas of relation are not copies of impressions.<sup>1</sup> Huxley even proposed, in order to obviate this objection, to amend "Hume's primary geography of the mind," by including "impressions of relation" among the elementary states of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> But Huxley did not have sufficient psychological training to enable him to be of any service to the Scottish philosopher on this occasion. Nor does the latter stand much in need of the proffered assistance. Hume, as indeed Seth admits, "does not strip his impressions quite bare of relations."<sup>3</sup> He recognizes the fact of relatedness among perceptions.<sup>4</sup> From this the way is easy to "the natural relations," or laws of association. He recognizes the fundamental form of association, viz., ab — bc,<sup>5</sup> when he speaks of "the bond of union" among ideas as "some associating quality."<sup>6</sup> Finally, he arrives at an abstract idea of relation by comparing perceptions. "Since equality is a relation," he says,<sup>7</sup> "it is not, strictly speaking, a property of the figures themselves, but arises merely from the comparison, which the mind makes betwixt them."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Introd.*, p. 174; Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*, p. 352; Seth, *Scottish Phil.*, pp. 54, 55; Grimm, *Zur. Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, pp. 592, 593; Pillon, *Psychologie de Hume*, p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Scottish Phil.*, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> *I*, p. 319.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Titchener, *Primer of Psychology*, p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> *I*, p. 319.

<sup>7</sup> *I*, p. 352; cf. pp. 341, 463.



Thus Hume advances from the relatedness of impressions and ideas, through association and comparison to the abstract idea of relation.

In the Inquiry, the section on philosophical relations is entirely omitted. Hume's division of complex ideas into relations, modes, and substances, being an inheritance from Locke, is not transmitted to the later work; partly, because it is not essential to his main purpose, and partly, because he has now largely outgrown Locke's influence.<sup>1</sup> For his former classification of complex ideas he substitutes the two-fold division of "the objects of human reason or inquiry,"<sup>2</sup> viz., relations of ideas, and matters of fact, without stating whether the relations thus involved are natural or philosophical. Modes, or general ideas, and substances he treats incidentally; but philosophical relations he recognizes only indirectly,<sup>3</sup> without explicitly mentioning.

Pfleiderer<sup>4</sup> suggests, as a reason for this omission of a treatment of philosophical relations, that the peculiar activity of mind betrayed by the multitude of relations and comparisons, in the Treatise, was inconsistent with Hume's theory of psychological atomism. The argument, however, has no weight. Activities of mind, that is, activities of perceptions, gave Hume no concern—and rightly—in his exposition of relations. On the other hand, several ambiguities and some inconsistencies arose through his speaking of philosophical relations as the ground of comparison, as acts of comparison, and as results of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, pp. 308, 342; IV, p. 17 n.

<sup>2</sup> P. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 63, 64, 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, pp. 128, 129; cf. Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 33.



comparison, without distinguishing between psychological relations and logical. By neglecting to treat this subject in the Inquiry, the author avoided many vexatious embarrassments. Besides, the explicit distinction between natural, and philosophical relations may have been omitted because, not only is there no real line of separation between them, but in the earlier work there arose at once a confusion between the relations of identity and resemblance, and also a tendency for the three natural relations to become indistinguishable from the three philosophical relations that might change "without any change in the ideas." Moreover, shortly after publishing the Treatise, Hume became more conscious than formerly of the difficulties involved in his system, through the inadequacy of relations satisfactorily to unite successive perceptions in consciousness, and thus explain personal identity.<sup>1</sup> This discovery, and likewise the author's well-known desire to present the more important parts of his philosophy in a popular manner furnish additional reasons for the omission in the briefer work of a discussion so obscure, intricate, and even self-contradictory as that on philosophical relations.<sup>2</sup>

Yet this omission does not necessarily imply any important change in Hume's doctrine. Minor changes it undoubtedly signifies, but essential ones obviously not. Incidental references confirm this conclusion. Thus, in the twofold definition of cause,<sup>3</sup> Hume implicitly admits a distinction between natural

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, pp. 458, 459, 576; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>3</sup> IV, pp. 63, 64, 79.

relations and philosophical. And the division of "the objects of human reason"<sup>1</sup> into relations of ideas and matters of fact, implies a distinction between the two classes of philosophical relations; for it corresponds in large measure, to the twofold division of these relations which is given in the Treatise, viz., into those that depend entirely upon the ideas compared, and those that may change without any change in the ideas. Hume now avoids all his former difficulties by substituting, for the twofold division of philosophical relations, the simple division of objects of reasoning into relations of ideas, and matters of fact, without explicitly stating whether the relations thus involved are natural, or philosophical.

II. General Ideas. Besides philosophical relations, the products of the laws of association are substances, and modes—including general ideas. The idea of substance will be dealt with later, along with that of external existence. And with regard to modes, the first question of interest is Hume's doctrine of abstract ideas.

Hume did not distinguish between abstract idea proper, and general idea, that is, between the idea of an attribute, and the idea of a common attribute, or between the idea of a part of an object, considered as a part, and the idea of a number of objects possessing common qualities. Following the example of Locke, he used the term abstract idea for any notion which is the result of abstraction and generalization. In this way he is accountable for much of the confusion which has prevailed in philosophical discussion, and which to a certain extent still continues, regarding the use of the terms abstract and general.

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 20; cf. I, p. 423; II, p. 240.

It is unnecessary to go into the details of Hume's argument, in the Treatise, to prove that general ideas, so-called, are always particular. The conclusion follows directly from his fundamental principles: All simple impressions are distinct existences; and all simple ideas are but copies of simple impressions, while all complex ideas are merely combinations of simple ideas. Hence, every idea must be determined in its degree "both of quantity and quality"; that is, all ideas are particular.<sup>1</sup> But although all ideas are particular, those that have a common name and are thus called general, may represent successively a number of individuals, "in such an imperfect manner as may serve the purposes of life." This they do by means of resemblance and custom.<sup>2</sup>

In the appendix<sup>3</sup> Hume added a brief note on general ideas, merely in order to further explain his doctrine, not to indicate any change of view. And in the Inquiry, in the few incidental references which he makes to this subject, he adopts the same position as he did in the Treatise. Thus in the twelfth section, after pointing out that the primary, as well as the secondary qualities of objects are perceptions in the mind, he affirms:<sup>4</sup> "Nothing can save us from this conclusion, but the asserting, that the ideas of those primary qualities are attained by *Abstraction*; an opinion, which, if we examine it accurately, we shall find to be unintelligible, and even absurd. An extension, that is neither tangible nor visible, cannot possibly be conceived: And a tangible or visible extension, which is neither hard nor soft, white nor black, is equally beyond the reach of human concep-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 326, 327.<sup>2</sup> P. 328.<sup>3</sup> I, p. 328 n.<sup>4</sup> P. 127.

tion. Let any man try to conceive a triangle in general. . . . and he will soon perceive the absurdity of all the scholastic notions with regard to abstraction and general ideas." Again, in a note referring to the contradictions in mathematics arising from the supposed infinite divisibility of quantity and number, he adds:<sup>1</sup> "It seems to me not impossible to avoid these absurdities and contradictions, if it be admitted, that there is no such thing as abstract or general ideas, properly speaking; but that all general ideas are, in reality, nothing but particular ones, attached to a general term, which recalls, upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble, in certain circumstances, the idea, present to the mind." On the question of general ideas, therefore, the position of the Inquiry is identical with that of the Treatise.

It has been much debated whether Hume's doctrine of general ideas is the same in both works, and also whether it is the same as that of Berkeley. On the latter point Meinong's view,<sup>2</sup> rather than Pfeiderer's,<sup>3</sup> is undoubtedly the more correct. Berkeley<sup>4</sup> does not deny absolutely that there are "general ideas," but only "that there are any *abstract* general ideas." Hume, on the other hand, is an ultra-Nominalist. On the former point, however, Meyer,<sup>5</sup> rather than Meinong,<sup>6</sup> holds the truer opinion. No change in Hume's doctrine of abstract or general notions is dis-

<sup>1</sup> P. 129 n.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume-Studien*, I, pp. 218, 219; cf. *Mind*, Vol. III, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Fraser, *Selections from Berkeley*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *H. und B. Phil. der Mathematik*, pp. 38, 39; cf. *Mind*, Vol. XX, p. 266.

<sup>6</sup> *Hume-Studien*, I, p. 259.



coverable in the Inquiry. Of course Hume's treatment, in the earlier work, of what he calls "a distinction of reason," may be looked upon as a concession to Conceptualism, and consequently, as an approach to Berkeley's position. Nevertheless, Grimm's statement,<sup>1</sup> that Hume's theory of Nominalism misrepresents Berkeley's, does not seem to be open to criticism. The fact that the "distinction of reason" is not drawn in the Inquiry cannot be regarded as having any special significance, since in the later work, not only is the treatment of general ideas almost entirely omitted, but this omission is easily explained. In the Treatise, Hume gave an exhaustive discussion of his doctrine because, (1) he regarded it as "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries" that had been made "of late years in the republic of letters"; and (2) he endeavored to confirm it by arguments which he hoped would "put it beyond all doubt and controversy."<sup>2</sup> In the Inquiry, he apparently assumed that he had succeeded in his object,<sup>3</sup> and consequently, thought it unnecessary to discuss the question again, particularly within the limits of a popular essay.

§ 14. *Conclusion.*—The main conclusions of the chapter may now be briefly stated:

1. In the treatment of the laws of association the position of both works is essentially identical. In the Treatise, Hume discovers inductively that there are three general principles of association, and he suggests a physiological explanation of them. In the Inquiry, he discovers in like manner that there are

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> P. 325.

<sup>3</sup> P. 127.



the same three general laws; but instead of attempting to explain their cause, he gives a popular treatment of their effects as illustrated in literature. In the earlier work, Hume remarked that nothing was more requisite for "a true philosopher," than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes; and in the later, he hoped to open up a field of speculation that would be "entertaining" and "instructive." The change of treatment, therefore, was evidently due to his desire to popularize his doctrine. The omission of a physiological explanation of association, in the *Inquiry*, is in keeping with his method of treating perceptions. In the briefer work, he does not offer any physiological explanation of the cause of perceptions, but implies the same view as in the *Treatise*. A similar conclusion may be inferred with regard to the cause of association.

2. The products of the laws of association are complex ideas,—relations, modes, and substances. This classification is omitted in the *Inquiry*, and in its stead is substituted the simple division of the objects of reasoning into relations of ideas and matters of fact. Incidentally, the same view of general ideas is expressed as was presented at considerable length in the *Treatise*.

The controversy on the doctrine of general ideas has been practically settled by experimental psychology. The general idea as a psychical process, or piece of mind, is of course particular in its existence. As such, however, it need not correspond to any particular individual thing that is included in the class which it represents, nor in fact to any one thing that exists anywhere. The error in Hume's doctrine

lay, not in his reasoning, but in his assumed data. He did not remain sufficiently true to his experimental method. The visualizing imagination with which he was endowed produced a psychological mirage, from the subtle illusions of which he never succeeded in completely freeing himself. He failed to discover: (1) that some minds think mainly in images, others in symbols; and (2) that the same mind may think in images, or in symbols, according as the subject-matter of thought is uncommon, or familiar. A pupil, for example, when beginning the study of algebra has a constant tendency to give some definite content to the characters employed in the reasoning; but on becoming conversant with algebraic processes, he makes the symbols alone serve as the vehicle of thought. The general idea may vary from a definite mental image to a mere symbol. Croom Robertson struck the nail on the head when he remarked:<sup>1</sup> "There are concepts which there is no possibility of definitely representing and which the mind keeps hold of only by the help of a definite name or sign. On the other hand, there is a kind of image, more or less definite, which in certain circumstances arises in the mind as representative of a number of resembling objects without being exactly representative of any of them, and which is thus a true concept." In every concept, the important factor for knowledge is not the psychological process, but the logical, the element of meaning. With this truth, indeed, Hume does not seem to have been wholly unacquainted, as is seen in his brief discussion on the "distinction of reason." But its full force, or true significance, he completely failed to perceive.

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, Vol. IV, p. 553.

## CHAPTER V.

### SPACE AND TIME.

§ 15. *Infinite Divisibility*.—Part II of the Treatise contains Hume's doctrine of space and time. In this discussion dialectic skill and profound originality are everywhere manifest. But the author's intellectual power is not organized. His visualizing imagination and erroneous presuppositions color and distort the argument to such an extent that this discussion, notwithstanding the exceedingly great merits of the exposition, is the most obscure, intricate, vacillating, and even self-contradictory in all his philosophical writings. Hume indeed seems to have been somewhat conscious of the difficulties inherent in this part of his system, for he entered upon his task with unusual care and forethought. In the last section of Part I he dealt with general ideas, thus preparing the way for the treatment of space and time in Part II. And here, before grappling with his subject proper, he disposed of the minor questions concerning the infinite divisibility of ideas, and the infinite divisibility of space and time.

Ideas, according to Hume, are not infinitely divisible, because: (1) "the capacity of the mind is limited, and can never attain a full and adequate conception of infinity"; and (2) "whatever is capable of being divided *in infinitum*, must consist of an infinite number of parts." Hence it follows, "that the *idea*, which we form of any finite quality, is not infinitely

divisible, but that by proper distinctions and separations we may run up this idea to inferior ones, which will be perfectly simple and indivisible."<sup>1</sup>

It is not quite clear, however, what the nature or characteristics of these indivisible ideas are. For Hume further asserts:<sup>2</sup> "When you tell me of the thousandth and ten thousandth part of a grain of sand I have a distinct idea of these numbers and of their different proportions; but the images, which I form in my mind to represent the things themselves, are nothing different from each other, nor inferior to that image, by which I represent the grain of sand itself, which is supposed so vastly to exceed them. What consists of parts is distinguishable into them, and what is distinguishable is separable. But whatever we may imagine of the thing, the idea of a grain of sand is not distinguishable, nor separable into twenty, much less into a thousand, ten thousand, or an infinite number of different ideas." Yet on the following page, he remarks: "This however is certain, that we can form ideas, which will be no greater than the smallest atom of the animal spirits of an insect a thousand times less than a mite." Hume's position seems to be this: one can form an idea about anything whatever that can be presented in imagination, no matter how small it may be; but this idea itself, if of a very minute object, can be divided at most only a few times.

Having shown that ideas are not infinitely divisible, Hume next endeavors to prove that space and time are not infinitely divisible. This is an easy task on the two assumptions which he makes: (1) "Whatever

<sup>1</sup> P. 334.

<sup>2</sup> P. 335.



ideas are adequate representations of objects, the relations . . . of the ideas are all applicable to the objects''; and (2) ''our ideas are adequate representations of the most minute parts of extension.'' <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since ideas are not infinitely divisible, space or extension is not infinitely divisible. The reasoning concerning the infinite divisibility of space holds also with respect to that of time. <sup>2</sup> The author is now ready to give his derivation of the ideas of space and time. The two subjects may be treated separately.

§ 16. *Space*.—Hume's doctrine of space and time is very easily misunderstood. Misconception, indeed, rather than interpretation, has been its common lot. A few quotations from expounders will serve as an introduction to the discussion; for the diversity of view among Hume's critics has much justification in the indefinite character of his treatement. Kühne asserts: <sup>3</sup> ''Hume held, with the dogmatic metaphysicians and most empiricists, space and time to be properties of things.'' Speckmann, <sup>4</sup> ''Hume starting from empiricism, in his investigations concerning space and time, comes to a similar result as does Kant through his transcendental idealism. Space and time are also for him, in essence, nothing more than subjective forms of intuition of the sensibility.'' Ritter, <sup>5</sup> ''Kant based his standpoint [in mathematics] on a doctrine of space different from that of Locke and Hume.'' Brede, <sup>6</sup> ''Extension consists, . . .

<sup>1</sup> P. 336.

<sup>2</sup> P. 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Ueber das Verhältniss d. Hume'schen u. Kantischen Erkenntnisstheorie*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ueber H. metaphysische Skepsis*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Kant u. Hume*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 22, 23.



according to Hume, of a finite number of visible and tangible mathematical points, i. e., of points which have no extension in themselves, . . . but which, when two of them come together, do not penetrate, but constitute a compound body consisting of parts." Seth,<sup>1</sup> "Time and space are, by [Hume's] own showing, two different manners in which perceptions are disposed, and in virtue of which they necessarily lose their character of isolated particulars. . . . They are relations."

In accordance with his habitual lack of precision, Hume uses space and extension synonymously, also object and impression.<sup>2</sup> He gives the following account of the derivation of the idea of space: "Upon opening my eyes, and turning them to the surrounding objects, I perceive many visible bodies; and upon shutting them again, and considering the distance betwixt these bodies, I acquire the idea of extension."<sup>3</sup> Thus he regards space or extension as a quality of visible bodies, that is, a quality of impressions; and he seems to hold that the idea of extension is distance, or a copy of distance. But distance is a relation, as he himself explained formerly, "because we acquire an idea of it by the comparing of objects."<sup>4</sup> Hence, true to his philosophical principles, he immediately adds: "My senses convey to me only the impressions of colored points, disposed in a certain manner. If the eye is sensible of any thing farther, I desire it may be pointed out to me. But if it be impossible to shew any thing farther, we may conclude with certainty, that the idea of extension is nothing but

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Phil.*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Cf.* pp. 341, 345.

<sup>3</sup> P. 340.

<sup>4</sup> P. 322.

a copy of these colored points, and of the manner of their appearance.”<sup>1</sup> Here Hume encounters a difficulty. He might have said that the idea of space is distance, or a copy of distance. But now, since he states that the senses convey only the impression of colored points disposed in a certain manner, it follows that the idea of space is a copy of color and its manner of appearance. In short, space or extension is a “compound impression” consisting of “several lesser impressions, that are indivisible to the eye or feeling, and may be called impressions of atoms or corpuscles endowed with color and solidity.”<sup>2</sup> And the idea of space, being but a copy of extension, “consists of parts” that are indivisible, and is itself extended.<sup>3</sup> “The idea of space or extension is nothing but the idea of visible or tangible points distributed in a certain order.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus far, Hume has given an account of the derivation of only the particular idea of space. He next explains the process of transition to the general idea. When we have had experience of the different colors, and have found “a resemblance in the disposition of colored points, of which they are composed, we omit the peculiarities of color, as far as possible, and found an abstract idea merely on that disposition of points, or manner of appearance, in which they agree. Nay even when the resemblance is carried beyond the objects of one sense, and the impressions of touch are found to be similar to those of sight in the disposition of their parts; this does not hinder the abstract idea from representing both, upon ac-

<sup>1</sup> P. 341.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 345, 346, 366.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 344, 523, 527.

<sup>4</sup> P. 358.

count of their resemblance."<sup>1</sup> The general idea of space, therefore, is the "disposition" of visual or tangible points, or "the manner" of appearance in which they agree; or as elsewhere put, the general idea of space is "no separate or distinct" idea, but merely that of "the manner or order" in which objects exist.<sup>2</sup>

But the author of the Treatise does not satisfy himself with a mere exposition of his theory of space. After presenting his doctrine, he proceeds to answer some objections that may be urged against it, and at the same time to define it more exactly. Since space is not infinitely divisible, what is the nature, one may ask, of its ultimate indivisible elements? Hume rejects both the theory of mathematical points, and that of physical points. Each of these views is absurd.<sup>3</sup> He adopts an intermediate position, and regards the ultimate indivisible elements of space as mathematical points endowed with color or solidity.<sup>4</sup> This, however, is equivalent to saying that they are physical points. The author even admits, although implicitly, that they are such, when he asserts:<sup>5</sup> "That compound impression, which represents extension, consists of several lesser impressions, that are indivisible to the eye or feeling, and may be called impressions of atoms or corpuscles endowed with color and solidity." Another essential part of Hume's doctrine is that the idea of space necessarily implies the existence of matter. The idea of pure space, or of a vacuum is impossible for "the idea of space or extension is nothing but the idea of visible or tangible points distributed in a certain order."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 341.<sup>2</sup> P. 346.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>4</sup> Cf. pp. 346, 347.<sup>5</sup> P. 345.<sup>6</sup> P. 358.

§ 17. *Time*.—The exposition of time is similar to that of space. The idea of time is derived from “the succession of our perceptions of every kind, ideas as well as impressions, and impressions of reflection as well as of sensation.”<sup>1</sup> And the abstract idea of time “is not derived from a particular impression mixed up with others, and plainly distinguishable from them; but arises altogether from the manner, in which impressions appear to the mind, without making one of the number.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the particular idea of time “can plainly be nothing but different ideas, or impressions, or objects disposed in a certain manner, that is, succeeding each other”;<sup>3</sup> and the general idea of time is “no separate or distinct” idea, but merely that of “the manner or order” in which objects exist.<sup>4</sup> Yet, since it is impossible to have an idea of pure or empty time, the general idea of time is always represented “in the fancy by some individual idea of a determinate quantity and quality.”<sup>5</sup>

§ 18. *Treatment of Space and Time in the Inquiry*.—In the Inquiry, there is nothing corresponding to Part II of the Treatise; hence, the discussion of space and time is here omitted. Yet, in the twelfth section and appended notes, there are some statements which imply that practically the same view of space and time prevails in both works.<sup>6</sup> Space and time are not infinitely divisible.<sup>7</sup> The ideas of space and time are derived from objects of sight and touch, by means of the senses.<sup>8</sup> And it is impossible to form an idea of empty space, or of empty time.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 341.    <sup>2</sup> P. 343.    <sup>3</sup> P. 344.    <sup>4</sup> P. 346.    <sup>5</sup> P. 342.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Baumann, *Die Lehren v. Raum, Zeit u. Mathematik*, II, p. 482.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 128, 129.

<sup>8</sup> Pp. 126, 127.

<sup>9</sup> P. 127.



There is one remark, however, in the Inquiry, which is inconsistent, formally at least, with a statement in the Treatise, and which accordingly calls for brief comment. In a foot-note Hume observes:<sup>1</sup> "Whatever disputes there may be about mathematical points, we may allow that there are physical points; that is, parts of extension, which cannot be divided or lessened, either by the eye or imagination." It has already been pointed out that, in the Treatise, he rejected the theory of physical points as an absurdity. It was inconsistent with his general maxim, "whatever objects are different are distinguishable." For "a real extension, such as a physical point is supposed to be, can never exist without parts, different from each other."<sup>2</sup> Yet it has also been shown that, although he rejected the doctrine of physical points in theory, he adopted it in practice. Consequently, the avowal here of the system of physical points is not of much significance.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that, in the appendix, Hume had almost arrived at the same view. "If it be asked," he says,<sup>4</sup> "if the invisible and intangible distance, interposed betwixt two objects, be something or nothing: 'it is easy to answer, that it is *something*, viz., a property of the objects, which affect the *senses* after such a particular manner.' " This statement, it is true, is not quite correct. For an invisible, intangible distance cannot affect the senses in any manner whatever. But the important circumstance to notice is, that what Hume

<sup>1</sup> P. 128.<sup>2</sup> I, p. 346.<sup>3</sup> Cf. Meyer, *Hume u. Berkeley's Phil. d. Math.*, p. 21, and n. 3; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 46.<sup>4</sup> I, p. 368.



calls an invisible, intangible distance he really regards as a property of objects.

Space and time were extremely difficult subjects for the author of the philosophy of human nature to deal with, on account of the falsity of some of his presuppositions. It is not surprising, therefore, that Part II is the most unsatisfactory division of the Treatise, and that it was omitted in the Inquiry. It is evident, however, that Hume regarded this part of his work as being of considerable importance, since he rewrote it—at least the treatment of space,—as is indicated by a letter to Millar in 1755. But although he sent the essay—"The Metaphysical Principles of Geometry"—to his publisher, he withdrew it before it was printed, because in the meantime Lord Stanhope, one of the most eminent mathematicians of his day, convinced him that "either there was some defect in the argument, or in its perspicuity."<sup>1</sup> This is the only reason positively known why Part II of the Treatise, although rewritten, was never published in its later form.

Before this letter to Millar became generally known, writers on Hume assigned many reasons to explain why Part II of the Treatise was omitted in the Inquiry. The argument of Brede is one of the most plausible, and is in substance as follows:<sup>2</sup> "As in the Treatise, Hume also assumes in the Essay indivisible, but real, visible and tangible points as the parts of extension. These are distinguished from the mathematical points of the Treatise only through their name, physical points. On a closer investigation of this

<sup>1</sup> Hill, Letters of D. H., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 46.

subject Hume does not enter. Such would have been impossible, without a direct criticism of his former view, according to which physical points could be distinguished into different parts. And then he would have been involved in great difficulties, in the application of his axiom, that whatever is distinguishable is separable." It is possible that a desire to avoid this contradiction may have had some influence on Hume when writing the later work. But as Brede himself observes, "the physical points" of the Inquiry are different only in name from "the mathematical points" of the Treatise. It is scarcely likely, therefore, that in the application of his maxim, Hume would have found himself involved in any greater difficulties in the one case than in the other. Rather, the cause of the omission of Part II is general, not special. The subject is an abstract one; and Hume's ideas on space and time were neither perfectly clear, nor strictly accurate.

§ 19. *Conclusion.*—It is easy, of course, as Green has abundantly shown, to discover inconsistencies in Hume's statement of his doctrine of space and time. For instance, space or extension is "nothing but a composition of visible or tangible points disposed in a certain order."<sup>1</sup> Upon shutting one's eyes and considering "the distance" between bodies, one acquires "the idea of extension."<sup>2</sup> Yet, "every idea is derived from some impression, which is exactly similar to it."<sup>3</sup> Or again, the particular idea of space is "nothing but a copy of . . . colored points, and of the manner of their appearance."<sup>4</sup> The general idea of space is "no separate or distinct" idea, "but

<sup>1</sup> P. 366.<sup>2</sup> P. 340.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>4</sup> P. 341.

merely" that of "the manner or order, in which objects exist."<sup>1</sup> Yet, all general ideas "are really nothing but particular ones, considered in a certain light."<sup>2</sup> But what the critics have failed to notice is, that Hume came remarkably near giving a valid and satisfactory exposition of space and time. True, they have admired the exceedingly ingenious manner in which he presented his argument. Thus if asked, what is space? he replies, "the manner or order in which objects exist." If asked, whence is the idea of space derived? he replies, "from objects of sight or touch?" And if asked, what is the idea of space? he replies, "a copy" of visual or tangible points, or "the disposition" of visual or tangible points, according as the one answer, or the other, suits his purpose; the former answer having reference to the particular idea of space derived logically in accordance with his system, and the latter having reference to the general idea of space as it prevails in popular thought. The critics, however, have been so busily engaged in detecting fallacies, and so intent on observing inconsistencies, that they have almost entirely overlooked the really significant points in his doctrine.

Hume's exposition of space and time has much more than plausibility to commend it. For the sake of brevity the discussion will be limited to the subject of space, as the argument, with but slight modifications, holds equally with regard to that of time. It is one of the chief distinguishing traits of the philosopher of Ninewells that he was the interpreter of actual experience, and not a prophet, nor a seer. That extension is an attribute of visual and tactual

<sup>1</sup> P. 346.

<sup>2</sup> P. 341.

sensations is now a common-place in psychology. Such also was the view of Hume; but in his terminology sensations are called impressions.<sup>1</sup> It is true, Ward, James, and a few other psychologists maintain that space is an attribute of all sensations. Whether or not this is the case depends entirely upon the definition of the term. Certain it is that extension is an object of sight and touch, that space is an aspect of the real world of things. And not only was Hume right in holding that space is a datum of sensuous experience, but he was also right in indicating that there is a fundamental difference between the individual perception of space, and the general notion. In this respect, he had a truer vision than had Immanuel Kant. His intellectual eye was not dimmed by the mists of German rationalism, nor was his natural force abated by wrestling with noumenal existences. Although in this instance, however, the open minded Scotsman had the truer psychological insight, it must be admitted that his visualizing imagination and erroneous conception of general ideas misled him with regard to the exact nature of the difference between the particular perception of space, and the general notion. The essential feature of the latter is not the psychological element, but the epistemological; and this the author of the philosophy of human nature failed to perceive. For a similar reason also Hume's treatment of infinite divisibility is palpably defective. The particular idea of space, as he rightly maintained, is not capable of division to infinity; but the general idea of space, the fundamental characteristic of which is the element of mean-

<sup>1</sup> P. 341.



ing, is without question infinitely divisible. Of like nature, moreover, is Hume's treatment of a vacuum. He was certainly right in insisting that pure or empty space is never an object of perception. For what is ordinarily called the perception of space, the particular idea of space, is really the perception of diffuse matter, bounded to a greater or less extent by objects of a denser quality.<sup>1</sup> On the other, hand, however, he was mistaken when he asserted that the idea of pure space, or of a vacuum is impossible. For by means of abstraction one may have a general idea of space, an idea of pure or empty space, as the possibility of movement-sensations, or as the system of space relations—actual or possible—which obtains among external things.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Russell, *Foundations of Geometry*, pp. 194, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fullerton, *Phil. Rev.*, Vol. X, p. 599; Nichols, *The Psychology of Time*, pp. 113, 139.

## CHAPTER VI.

### KNOWLEDGE—INTUITIVE AND DEMONSTRATIVE.

§ 20. *The Faculties of Mind.*—The accounts of Hume's theory of knowledge, as presented in both the *Treatise* and *Inquiry*, are exceedingly perplexing. This is due, in large measure, to the fact that the epistemological terminology of his day was not adequate to the treatment of his subject-matter. At one time he did not properly define his terms; at another, he did not consistently hold to his definitions. Moreover, not having a sufficient number of appropriate terms at his command, he occasionally gave to the same word different, or provisional definitions, according as the circumstances of the case required, without explaining the relation of these definitions to one another. This is particularly true of the names denoting mental faculties, or sources of knowledge. By faculty he meant, in general, the mind acting in a certain way. Of those which he recognized, the more important are the six following: sensation, memory, imagination, understanding or reason, reflection, and instinct.

Sensation, immediately or mediately, is the source of all knowledge. When impressions of sense return as ideas, they are called memory, or imagination, according as they possess—as a general rule,—or do not possess, a certain degree of force and vivacity, and a certain measure of fixity of order. When the ideas of imagination—or of memory—lose, to a certain ex-

tent, their sense content, and are combined in new forms by means of comparison, abstraction, or generalization, they become transformed into conceptions, and are attributed to the understanding or reason. Thus imagination and reason, like imagination and memory, differ only in degree. As Hume said,<sup>1</sup> the understanding or reason is but "the general or more established properties of the imagination." Hence, memory, imagination, and reason are different stages of one and the same process.<sup>2</sup> Reflection sometimes accompanies, sometimes follows sensation, memory, imagination, and reason. It is in part the basis of instinct.

Instinct is an indispensable factor in the philosophy of human nature. Of amorphous character, it plays many parts. It corresponds somewhat with the element of feeling in perceptions; it is a sentiment, or manner of conception. It is also closely related to sensation. "It seems evident," says Hume,<sup>3</sup> "that men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses." Moreover, instinct includes, to a greater or less extent, imagination, belief, habit, custom, and experiential or moral reasoning. "All belief of matter of fact or real existence," Hume affirms, in the *Inquiry*,<sup>4</sup> "is derived merely from some object, present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object. . . . This belief is the necessary

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 547; cf. IV, p. 38 n.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gore, *The Imagination in Spinoza and Hume*, p. 74.—  
"Reason is the imagination generalized, and the imagination is reason particularized."

<sup>3</sup> IV, p. 124; cf. I, pp. 483, 548.

<sup>4</sup> P. 40; cf. I, pp. 403, 474, 475.

result of placing the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits: or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent." Again,<sup>1</sup> "Nothing leads to this inference [based on the idea of cause and effect] but custom or a certain instinct of our nature." And in the *Treatise* he asserts:<sup>2</sup> "Reason [experiential reasoning] is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations. . . . Nature may certainly produce whatever can arise from habit: Nay, habit is nothing but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin." Furthermore, instinct is a species of knowledge derived from "the original hand of nature," and which is capable of little or no advancement.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it may be regarded as including what are commonly called the ideals of reason,—goodness, beauty, truth, duty, etc. "There is a great difference," says Hume,<sup>4</sup> "betwixt such opinions as we form after a calm and profound reflection, and such as we embrace by a kind of instinct or natural impulse, on account of their suitableness and conformity to the mind." Naturally, therefore, instinct is superior to reason. It is the great guide of human life.

<sup>1</sup> P. 131.<sup>2</sup> P. 471; *cf.* pp. 387, 404.<sup>3</sup> IV, p. 88; *cf.* I, pp. 470, 471.<sup>4</sup> I, p. 501; *cf.* pp. 474, 475, 478, 548, 549.



For the sake of clearness, it is well to note that, in the Inquiry, Hume made less use of imagination, and more use of instinct, than he did in the Treatise. Many mental processes which, in the earlier work, were attributed to imagination are, in the later, ascribed to instinct, custom, or nature. This change of treatment, although it does not indicate any change of doctrine, seems to imply a truer appreciation of the function of instinct. Yet it does not necessarily imply even this much. At most, it only rendered explicit in the Inquiry, what was implicit in the Treatise. For instinct, custom, or habit is always the basis or ground of the transition of imagination. The full significance of the change it is probably impossible to determine; for Hume used instinct, custom, habit, and imagination more or less interchangeably in both works. In the Treatise he asserted:<sup>1</sup> "When I consider the influence of this constant conjunction, I perceive, that such a relation can never be an object of reasoning, and can never operate upon the mind, but by means of custom, which determines the imagination to make a transition from the idea of one object to that of its usual attendant, and from the impression of one to a more lively idea of the other." Again,<sup>2</sup> "Reason [experiential reasoning] is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations." That is, reasoning is regarded equally as a transition of the imagination, and as a wonderful and unintelligible instinct. Likewise, in the Inquiry, the author stated:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 464; cf. p. 487.

<sup>2</sup> P. 471.

<sup>3</sup> P. 62; cf. p. 65.

“After a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connection, therefore, which we feel in the *mind*, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection.” Further,<sup>1</sup> “We have no argument to convince us, that objects, which have, in our experience, been frequently conjoined, will likewise, in other instances, be conjoined in the same manner; and . . . nothing leads us to this inference but custom or a certain instinct of our nature.” “Provided we agree about the thing,” Hume once said, “it is needless to dispute about the terms.” Accordingly, in the briefer work, instead of attributing certain mental processes directly to imagination, as formerly, and then indirectly to custom or instinct, he often ascribed them to custom, instinct, or nature directly.

§ 21. *Intuitive Knowledge*.—In the philosophy of human nature, impressions and ideas are the ultimate elements of knowledge. These possess certain qualities which constitute the ground of the three natural relations. Natural relations are the source of the seven kinds of philosophical relations, also of modes and substances. And the philosophical relations are the basis of the different degrees of certainty. In Part III of the *Treatise*, Hume deals with this last problem under the title “Knowledge and Probability.” As has already been stated,<sup>2</sup> he distinguishes two classes of philosophical relations: those that depend entirely

<sup>1</sup> P. 130; cf. p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> P. 83.

upon the ideas compared, and those that may be changed without any change in the ideas. The former class-relations of resemblance, contrariety, degrees of quality, and proportions in number and quantity—constitute “the foundation of science,” and are objects of knowledge and certainty. The latter—identity, contiguity, and causation,—are the ground of probability.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is of two kinds, intuitive, and demonstrative; and probability also is of two kinds, proofs, and probability in a narrower sense.<sup>2</sup> Proofs and probability will be treated in the three following chapters.

Intuitive knowledge means sense and memory knowledge. It is based on the relations of resemblance, contrariety, and degrees of quality. It arises immediately from the observation, or comparison of impressions and ideas. It does not necessarily mean exact, nor certain knowledge, but only that kind of knowledge which the mind obtains “at first sight,” or which it arrives at immediately on the perception, among impressions and ideas, of the relations of resemblance, contrariety, or degrees of quality. Thus, in the *Treatise*, Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> “And though it be impossible to judge exactly of the degrees of any quality, such as color, taste, heat, cold, when the difference betwixt them is very small; yet it is easy to decide, that any of them is superior or inferior to another, when their difference is considerable. And this decision we always pronounce at first sight, without any inquiry or reasoning.”

There is no specific treatment of intuitive knowledge in the later work. In the earlier, Hume, follow-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 372, 373.

<sup>2</sup> P. 423.

<sup>3</sup> P. 373.

ing Locke, regarded knowledge as the perception of the agreement or disagreement of impressions and ideas; consequently, he considered the philosophical relations as the ground or possibility of reasoning. But in the Inquiry, he omitted the table of philosophical relations, and for the classification of knowledge, or complex ideas, into relations, modes, and substances, he substituted the twofold division of "all the objects of human reason or inquiry," viz., relations of ideas, and matters of fact;<sup>1</sup> relations of ideas corresponding to those philosophical relations that depend entirely upon the ideas compared, and matters of fact corresponding, in large measure, to those philosophical relations that may change while the ideas compared remain the same. Accordingly, under the former division he includes the sciences of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, and in short, every affirmation which is either "intuitively or demonstratively certain," and under the latter, the natural and historical sciences of probability.<sup>2</sup> In Book III of the *Treatise of Human Nature*<sup>3</sup> Hume reasserted the position of Book I, that resemblance, contrariety, degrees of quality, and proportions in number and quantity are the only relations which are "susceptible of certainty and demonstration." Although in the Inquiry<sup>4</sup> he thought that "the sciences of quantity and number" might be pronounced "the only proper objects of knowledge and demonstration," there is no reason to suppose that his view of intuitive knowledge was different from that presented in the Treatise. He implies the same distinction as formerly between intui-

<sup>1</sup> P. 20.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 20, 22, 135.<sup>3</sup> II, pp. 240, 241.<sup>4</sup> P. 134.



tive and demonstrative knowledge, when he says that "the connection" between propositions is not "intuitive," if it "requires a medium."<sup>1</sup>

It may be imagined, perhaps, that there is some special significance in the substitution, in the later work, of the twofold division of knowledge—relations of ideas, and matters of fact—for the threefold division of the products of the laws of association, and for the subdivision of philosophical relations. Such, however, does not seem to be the case. Hume wrote the *Treatise* with Locke often in mind. But although he followed his master in some reduplications, cross-divisions, and contradictions, he endeavored to improve upon Locke's celebrated *Essay*. Ideas of sensation and reflection, as the original elements of knowledge, he transformed into impressions and ideas of sensation and reflection. While he accepted Locke's definition of knowledge, and his classification of complex ideas; instead of the four kinds of agreement and disagreement between ideas, as the necessary condition of knowledge, he put forward the seven kinds of philosophical relations. The two tables are related as follows:

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Identity and diversity. | 1, 2, 3. Identity, resemblance, and contrariety.  |
| 2. Relation.               | 4, 5, 6. Contiguity or relations of time and place, degrees of quality, and proportions in number and quantity. |
| 3. Co-existence.           | 7. Cause and effect.  |
| 4. Real-existence.         |   |

It will be observed that Hume's classification of

<sup>1</sup> P. 30.

philosophical relations differs considerably from Locke's four kinds of agreement or disagreement between ideas; for not only has the author of the *Treatise* naturally no place for knowledge of substance or real-existence, but his relations of identity and contrariety have not the same meaning as Locke's agreement or disagreement in the way of identity and diversity.

As Hume developed his system of philosophy, he worked gradually farther away from Locke's theory of knowledge, and approached, in certain respects, the position of Butler.<sup>1</sup> Soon he adopted relations of ideas and matters of fact as a convenient classification of the objects of knowledge. It is one of Patten's<sup>2</sup> many misconceptions that this classification first appeared in the *Inquiry*. On the contrary, it developed step by step with the natural progress of the author's thought, as he proceeded from the consideration of theoretical philosophy to that of practical. In some passages of the *Treatise*, for example, it is hinted at, or implied.<sup>3</sup> In Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature* it is, for the first time, explicitly stated. "Truth is of two kinds," says Hume,<sup>4</sup> "consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, considered as such, or in the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence." And in Book III of the *Treatise of Human Nature* it is frequently employed, as in the following passage:<sup>5</sup> "As the operations of human understanding divide them-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Analogy*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *The Development of English Thought*, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 394, 395, 483.

<sup>4</sup> II, p. 223; cf. p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> II, p. 240; cf. p. 236.

selves into two kinds, the comparing of ideas, and the inferring of matter of fact; were virtue discovered by the understanding; it must be an object of one of these operations, nor is there any third operation of the understanding, which can discover it." The impossibility of giving a popular exposition of philosophical relations, or a satisfactory treatment within a limited compass was probably the chief cause for the introduction in their stead, in the Inquiry, of the simple division of objects of knowledge into relations of ideas and matters of fact.<sup>1</sup>

§ 22. *Demonstrative Knowledge*.—Demonstrative knowledge is that which arises from the understanding or reason. It is based on the relations of number and quantity. Very simple relations of number or quantity, such as may be observed at "one view," are more properly intuitive knowledge. But when these relations can be perceived only by means of "a chain of reasoning," they constitute demonstrative knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The sciences of demonstration are arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.

Hume's doctrine of mathematics has always been one of the interesting puzzles in his philosophy. It has been a subject of universal contention, and many expositions—as well as criticisms—of it have been given. These, however, at most have been but partially correct, and have resulted rather in contradiction and confusion, than in conviction or illumination. A few quotations, while exhibiting the variety of interpretation on the question, may suggest some guiding thoughts for a new solution. Masaryk asserts:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 80–83, above.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 373, 374.

<sup>3</sup> *D. H. Skepsis u. d. Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung*, p. 6; cf. Windelband, *Gesch. d. n. Phil.*, I, pp. 321, 327; Rosenkranz,

"According to Hume, mathematics is an absolutely certain science, because founded on *a priori* principles." Watson,<sup>1</sup> "The mathematical doctrine of Hume may be stated in these three propositions: (1) Mathematical judgments rest upon impressions of sense; (2) they are singular; (3) they are only approximately true." Spicker,<sup>2</sup> "We must here note attentively that Hume, equally with Kant, considers mathematics as a pure activity of thought, which takes place independently of all experience, and is, therefore, *a priori* certain." Stuckenberg,<sup>3</sup> "Mathematics, which Hume considered as a relation of ideas, is grounded by him also exclusively on experience." Petzholtz,<sup>4</sup> "Mathematics belongs to the sciences which treat of relations of ideas, whose propositions, therefore, we discover through the pure activity of thought. . . . While Hume allows to arithmetic this unconditioned certainty, he does not attribute such without reserve to geometry." Caird,<sup>5</sup> "Hume in his earlier treatise attempted . . . to trace back the ideas of mathematics to impressions of space and time: but the attempt led him to the denial of the objective validity of mathematical truth, in so far as it goes beyond the possibility of empirical measurement."

*Gesch. d. Kantischen Phil.*, p. 23; Volkelt, *Erfahrung u. Denken*, p. 108; Uhl, *H. Stellung in d. englischen Phil.*, pp. 31, 32; Ritter, *Kant u. Hume*, pp. 7, 9.

<sup>1</sup> *An Outline of Philosophy*, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Kant, Hume u. Berkeley*, pp. 110, 117, 125; cf. Gordy, *Hume as Sceptic*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Grundprobleme in Hume*, p. 18; cf. I, pp. 222, 223.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Hauptpunkte D. H. Erkenntnislehre*, p. 29; cf. Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*, p. 353.

<sup>5</sup> *The Critical Philosophy of I. K.*, I, p. 256; cf. Mahaffy and Bernard, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 23, and n.



Webb,<sup>1</sup> "As to Hume's opinion with reference to the *a priori* character of mathematics, there can be no intelligent diversity of opinion. . . . He abandoned the doctrine of the Treatise." Riehl,<sup>2</sup> "It is erroneous to assert, that Hume has not doubted the validity of pure mathematics, since he, in the Treatise (and even in the Inquiry), not only doubts but positively impugns the evidence for geometry, and restricts validity to the abstract part of mathematics, the pure doctrine of quantity." Statements similar to these might be quoted indefinitely. They indicate great diversity in the answers given to the four following questions: (1) Is mathematics, according to Hume an *a priori* science? (2) Is it an absolutely certain science? (3) Is it a perfectly exact science? (4) Is there any difference between the respective positions of the Treatise and Inquiry on the three preceding questions? These quotations also indicate that the ground of their diversity is not solely subjective differences in the writers. The solution of the problem is to be sought only in a study of the objective differences that exist in Hume's treatment. And the key to this solution is the discernment that Hume, in the Treatise, gave three different, although not distinct or separate accounts of mathematics, corresponding to three stages of development in his doctrine. These accounts may be called the epistemological, the logical, and the psychological. They will be treated in their order.

#### I. The Epistemological Treatment of Mathematics.

<sup>1</sup> *Veil of Isis*, pp. 101, 102; cf. Long, *Ueber Hume's Lehre v. d. Ideen u. d. Substanz*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, pp. 69, 96, 97; cf. Windelband, *Hist. of Phil.*, p. 473; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 11, 35.

—Hume's first account of his doctrine of mathematics is given in Parts II and III. The mathematical sciences, as already stated, are based on the philosophical relations of number and quantity. These relations, in turn, are based on certain qualities of impressions and ideas.<sup>1</sup> Geometrical relations are modes of space. Arithmetical and algebraic relations are modes of number. Both space and number are constituted of simple and indivisible units. The units of space are mathematical points, "endowed with color" or "solidity."<sup>2</sup> But of the units of number no explanation is offered. Hume merely asserts that "the unity, which can exist alone, and whose existence is necessary to that of all number, . . . must be perfectly indivisible and incapable of being resolved into any lesser unity."<sup>3</sup> The idea of space is derived from the senses of sight and touch.<sup>4</sup> And the idea of number arises from the perception of objects.<sup>5</sup> It is manifest, therefore, that all the mathematical sciences are empirical.

Arithmetic and algebra Hume regards as perfectly exact and certain sciences, because in dealing with numbers, the subject-matter of these sciences, "we are possessed of a precise standard, by which we can judge of [their] equality and proportion; and according as they correspond or not to that standard, we determine their relations, without any possibility of error."<sup>6</sup> Geometry, on the other hand, he declares "falls short of that perfect precision and certainty, which are peculiar to arithmetic and algebra, . . . because its fundamental principles are derived merely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 322, 323, 372.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 345, 347.

<sup>3</sup> P. 338.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 340, 341.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 337, 338.

<sup>6</sup> P. 374.

from appearances.”<sup>1</sup> That is to say, geometry would be a perfectly exact and certain science, if its fundamental principles, the definitions and axioms on which it is founded, were perfectly exact and certain. But these definitions and axioms are derived merely from the appearances of objects, and consequently, are not exact. Hence, the science of geometry is neither perfectly exact nor certain. Yet geometry excels in exactness and certainty “the imperfect judgments of our senses and imagination.” For although Hume admits that the judgments concerning geometrical relations are not “more exempt from doubt and error than those on any other subject,”<sup>2</sup> he maintains, at the same time, that the fundamental principles of geometry “depend on the easiest and least deceitful appearances,” and therefore, “bestow on their consequences a degree of exactness, of which these consequences are singly incapable.”<sup>3</sup>

Apparently inconsistent with the preceding account is a passage in which Hume asserts that “geometry fails of evidence” in one “single point”—its demonstrations for the infinite divisibility of extension,—but that “all its other reasonings command our fullest assent and approbation.”<sup>4</sup> This latter statement, if taken literally, cannot be harmonized with Hume’s general position. But the author undoubtedly meant that it should be understood only in a relative sense. For he repeatedly affirms that geometry is not an exact nor certain science like arithmetic or algebra, its first principles having been derived from the general appearances of objects.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 374.

<sup>2</sup> P. 353.

<sup>3</sup> P. 374.

<sup>4</sup> P. 357.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 350, 353, 354, 355.

It may be noted, however, that if geometry dealt with discrete quantity, like numbers, instead of with continuous quantity, as is space, it would, according to Hume, be a perfectly exact and certain science.<sup>1</sup> Arithmetic and algebra are such, because they deal with discrete quantity. They possess a perfect exactness and certainty, because the exact difference between any two numbers whatever can easily be determined. The author speaks of two standards of certainty in geometry, one accurate, the other inaccurate. The inaccurate standard is the indefinite presentations of the senses and imagination, "derived from a comparison of objects, upon their general appearance, corrected by measuring and juxta-position." The accurate standard is the indivisible points of which lines and other geometrical figures are composed.<sup>2</sup> But although this latter standard is theoretically exact, it is impracticable both in science and in common life. If mathematicians be asked what they mean when they say that one line or surface is equal to, greater, or less than another, "[those] who defend the hypothesis of indivisible points," Hume asserts,<sup>3</sup> "need only reply, that lines or surfaces are equal, when the numbers of points in each are equal; and that as the proportion of the numbers varies, the proportion of the lines and surfaces is also varied. But though this answer be just," he continues, "as well as obvious; yet I may affirm, that this standard of equality is entirely useless, and that it never is from such a comparison we determine objects to be equal or unequal with respect to each other." On the question of the exactness and certainty of geom-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 351, 374.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 351, 357.<sup>3</sup> P. 351.



etry, he explicitly states his position as follows:<sup>1</sup> "It appears, then, that the ideas which are most essential to geometry, viz., those of equality and inequality, of a right line and a plain surface, are far from being exact and determinate, according to our common method of conceiving them. . . . As the ultimate standard of these figures is derived from nothing but the senses and imagination, it is absurd to talk of any perfection beyond what these faculties can judge of; since the true perfection of any thing consists in its conformity to its standard."

The results of the discussion thus far may here be summarized. Proportions in number and quantity are the ground of demonstrative knowledge. But these proportions, like the other philosophical relations, are derived by means of the senses. Consequently, mathematics is an empirical science. Arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact and certain sciences, since, dealing with discrete quantity, they possess a perfectly exact standard. But geometry, although it excels in exactness and certainty the inaccurate judgments of the senses or imagination, falls short of perfect precision, because dealing with continuous quantity, it lacks a perfectly exact standard. This may be called Hume's epistemological treatment of mathematics. It is only one part of his doctrine, and is considerably modified later.

II. The Logical Treatment of Mathematics.—In Part IV, the author draws the logical consequences of his philosophical principles, and sums up his doctrine of the understanding. In the first section he treats of mathematics in the following manner:<sup>2</sup> "In

<sup>1</sup> P. 356; cf. pp. 348, 350, 353, 355.

<sup>2</sup> P. 472.

all demonstrative sciences the rules are certain and infallible; but when we apply them, our fallible and uncertain faculties are very apt to depart from them, and fall into error. We must, therefore, in every reasoning form a new judgment, as a check or control on our first judgment or belief; and must enlarge our view to comprehend a kind of history of all the instances, wherein our understanding has deceived us, compared with those, wherein its testimony was just and true. . . . By this means all knowledge degenerates into probability. . . . There is no algebraist nor mathematician so expert in his science, as to place entire confidence in any truth immediately on his discovery of it, or regard it as any thing, but a mere probability. . . . In accounts of any length or importance, merchants seldom trust to the infallible certainty of numbers for their security." And as no one will maintain "that our assurance in a long enumeration exceeds probability," Hume thinks he may "safely affirm, that there scarce is any proposition concerning numbers, of which we can have a fuller security." If "any single addition were certain, every one would be so, and consequently the whole or total sum." But of course the whole is not certain. "Since, therefore," he concludes,<sup>1</sup> "all knowledge resolves itself into probability, and becomes at last of the same nature with that evidence which we employ in common life, we must now examine this latter species of reasoning, and see on what foundation it stands."

In every judgment concerning probability, and consequently concerning knowledge—since "all knowl-

<sup>1</sup> P. 473.

edge resolves itself into probability,"—there are, according to Hume, two sources of error and uncertainty, the understanding which judges, and the object about which the judgment is made.<sup>1</sup> Hence, even "the man of the best sense and longest experience . . . [is] conscious of many errors in the past, and must still dread the like for the future." Hume contends that, because of this natural fallibility of the understanding, every judgment requires to be corrected by another judgment, this one by another and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus as "demonstration is subject to the control of probability," so is "probability liable to a new correction by a reflex act of the mind, wherein the nature of our understanding, and our reasoning from the first probability become our objects." And he concludes again:<sup>2</sup> "When I reflect on the natural fallibility of my judgment, I have less confidence in my opinions, than when I only consider the objects concerning which I reason; and when I proceed still farther, to turn the scrutiny against every successive estimation I make of my faculties, all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence." This is the logical account in Hume's treatment of mathematics,—or rather one might say of knowledge. For it has doubtless been noticed that, in following his order of exposition, the subject has been gradually broadened, until now the account applies not merely to mathematics but to knowledge in general.

The foregoing passages have given rise to two different lines of interpretation, neither of which is quite correct. According to the one, Hume distinguished

<sup>1</sup> P. 474.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. p. 475.

between mathematics as a pure science and mathematics as an applied science, and maintained that the former possesses exact and demonstrative certainty, but the latter only probability. According to the other interpretation, Hume's doctrine of mathematics is the culmination of a system of absolute skepticism or nihilism. The former view prevails, to a considerable extent, among the German critics; the latter is not uncommon with the writers of the Scottish school. They may be examined in succession.

Windelband affirms:<sup>1</sup> "*Mathematics is . . . the sole demonstrative science*; and is that just because it relates to nothing else than the possible relations between contents of ideas, and asserts nothing whatever as to any relation of these to a real world. In this way the terministic principle of Hobbes is in complete control with Hume, but the latter proceeds still more consistently with his limitation of this theory to pure mathematics." And Riehl asserts:<sup>2</sup> "Hume doubts not the exactness of pure, but the validity of applied mathematics." This position has been controverted by Adamson. "No question," he declares,<sup>3</sup> "arises regarding the *existence* of the fact represented by the ideas, and in so far, at least, mathematical judgments may be regarded as hypothetical. . . . That the propositions are hypothetical in this fashion does not imply any distinction between the abstract truth of the ideal judgments and the imperfect correspondence of concrete material with these

<sup>1</sup> *History of Philosophy*, p. 473; cf. Petzholtz, *Die Hauptpunkte D. H. Erkenntnislehre*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, pp. 96, 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*, p. 353.



ideal relations. Such distinction is quite foreign to Hume, and can only be ascribed to him from an entire misconception of his view regarding the ideas of space and time." The statement of Adamson is the more correct one. Not only does Hume fail to distinguish between "the abstract truth of the ideal judgments and the imperfect correspondence of concrete material with these ideal relations," but he denies that this distinction exists. "[To reason]," he says,<sup>1</sup> "that the objects of geometry, . . . are mere ideas in the mind; and not only never did, but never can exist in nature," is "absurd and contradictory." Again,<sup>2</sup> "The notion of any correction [in geometry] beyond what we have instruments and art to make, is a mere fiction of the mind, and useless as well as incomprehensible." Finally, he states conclusively:<sup>3</sup> "It is usual with mathematicians, to pretend, that those ideas, which are their objects, are of so refined and spiritual a nature, that they fall not under the conception of the fancy, but must be comprehended by a pure and intellectual view, of which the superior faculties of the soul are alone capable. . . . But to destroy this artifice, we need but reflect on that principle so often insisted on, that all our ideas are copied from our impressions." At the same time, it should be observed that, somewhat in accordance with the view expressed by Windelband and Riehl, Hume recognized a distinction between arithmetic and algebra as exact and certain sciences, and the practical application of these sciences to concrete material. He repeatedly asserted that arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact and certain,<sup>4</sup> but that in practice "all

<sup>1</sup> P. 348.

<sup>2</sup> P. 353.

<sup>3</sup> P. 375.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 374, 472.

knowledge degenerates into probability.'"<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he said:<sup>2</sup> "In all demonstrative sciences the rules are certain and infallible; but when we apply them, our fallible and uncertain faculties are very apt to depart from them, and fall into error."

Controversy on this subject has arisen owing to the fact that Hume neglected to give a derivation of number. Adamson, following in the wake of Green, insists that, on Hume's fundamental principles, a derivation of number suitable to serve as a foundation for mathematics cannot be given. While on the other hand, Windelband, recognizing that Hume held arithmetic and algebra to be perfectly exact and certain sciences, erroneously concludes that mathematics is a pure science. The truth of the matter seems to be this: not only is a derivation of abstract number possible, in accordance with the principles of empiricism, but so also is a derivation of abstract quantity. For by means of approximations, abstraction, and generalization, the transition is not difficult from the perception of real lines and circles in nature to the ideas of perfectly straight lines and perfect circles corresponding to the definitions of geometry. Hume, neglecting to give a derivation of number, failed to show how arithmetic and algebra, as abstract sciences, are possible. Nevertheless, he rightly held that arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact and certain. And he not only failed to give a derivation of quantity—pure or abstract quantity,—but contended that such could not be given, and hence mistakenly asserted that geometry is not an exact nor certain science.

The position of many writers of the Scottish school,

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 472, 473.

<sup>2</sup> P. 472.

that Hume's theory of knowledge is a system of absolute skepticism, is of course unwarranted. True, in so far as they assert that absolute skepticism is the result of the strictly logical, as distinguished from the psychological factor in this theory of knowledge, they are literally correct. The author admits this himself. "When I proceed still farther," he says,<sup>1</sup> "to turn the scrutiny against every successive estimation I make of my faculties, all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence." But Hume clearly perceived that the human mind did not always function in conformity with the laws of logic. Then followed naturally his psychological account of mathematics,—or rather, it may be said, of knowledge in general.

III. The Psychological Treatment of Mathematics. —The psychological element is a most important factor in Hume's theory of knowledge. It is the great head stone of the corner. It is not only an original, but a distinctively Anglo-Saxon contribution to philosophy. Pfeiderer has well said that "imagination and association are two genuine English powers, through which this people, on the ideal ground of poetry and in the magnificent arena of achievement, have brilliantly paid their tribute to the world's history." Another tribute has similarly been paid in the subtle realm of speculative thought.

After stating that the logical result of his epistemological account of knowledge is a total extinction of belief and evidence, Hume proceeds:<sup>2</sup> "Should it here be asked me, whether I sincerely assent to this argument, which I seem to take such pains to incul-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 474, 475.

<sup>2</sup> P. 474.

cate, and whether I be really one of those skeptics, who hold that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in any thing possessed of any measure of truth and falsehood; I should reply, that this question is entirely superfluous, and that neither I, nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion. Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel." This determination of nature arises from custom or habit. From custom arises belief. And belief alone preserves the mind from total skepticism.<sup>1</sup> But all demonstrative knowledge—arithmetic and algebra as well as geometry—is reduced to a species of probability. In short, the greatest degree of certainty, whether intuitive or demonstrative, is belief. "Belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures,"<sup>2</sup> and the degree of conviction attending it—although at times the conviction is delusive<sup>3</sup>—"is sufficient for our purpose, either in philosophy or common life."<sup>4</sup>

IV. Conclusion.—The answers of the Treatise to the first three questions that demand settlement have now been indicated. The answer to the first, is an unqualified negative. Mathematics is not an *a priori* science, but empirical, because its first principles are sensible. The answer to the second question is a qualified negative. Is mathematics an absolutely certain science? It depends upon the meaning attributed to absolute. Mathematics is not an absolutely certain science, in the sense of being *a priori* certain. For the human mind is finite; knowledge is relative; and in nearly all thinking processes there is a possi-

<sup>1</sup> P. 475.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 545, 547.<sup>4</sup> P. 476.



bility of error. But arithmetic and algebra are empirically certain. Geometry, of course, is not. In certain passages, however, it is said that arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact and certain sciences.<sup>1</sup> Yes, those statements are in the epistemological account, and are to be understood, therefore, in a provisional or relative sense. In the psychological account, Hume holds that these sciences are practically, or empirically certain, not absolutely or *a priori* certain. The answer to the third question is a divided one. Arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact sciences; on the other hand, geometry is not.

§ 23. *Treatment of Mathematics in the Appendix.*—In the appendix Hume added a few remarks on geometry, for the purpose of further explaining his meaning. These passages do not indicate any change of view from that expressed in the Treatise, and consequently, do not require extended comment. There is but one statement that seems to call for a word of explanation. "If [mathematicians] employ," says the author,<sup>2</sup> "as is usual, the inaccurate standard, derived from a comparison of objects, upon their general appearance, corrected by measuring and juxtaposition; their first principles, though certain and infallible, are too coarse to afford any such subtile inferences as they commonly draw from them." Here he speaks of the first principles of geometry as being "certain and infallible," whereas, in the Treatise he had regarded them as being inexact, and not precisely true.<sup>3</sup> The inconsistency is only verbal. In the appendix he does not mean, literally, that the first prin-

<sup>1</sup> P. 374.

<sup>2</sup> P. 357.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 350, 356, 373, 374.

ciples of geometry are "certain and infallible," for he not only says that they are "too coarse" to afford such "subtile inferences" as are commonly drawn from them, but he immediately adds that they "are founded on the imagination and senses." And in another passage he asserts<sup>1</sup> "that the only useful notion of equality, or inequality, is derived from the whole united appearance and the comparison of particular objects."

§ 24. *Treatment of Mathematics in the Inquiry.*—In the Inquiry, on the subject of mathematics, there is at once observable a great difference in the form of statement. Since Hume omits that portion of the Treatise which deals with space and time, and consequently neglects to give a derivation of space, as he did formerly to give a derivation of number, the sciences of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry seem to stand upon the same basis of exactness and certainty; and since he omits the account of philosophical relations, the former distinctions between the different degrees of evidence not only fall into the background, but almost entirely disappear. The obvious result is that the author appears to have approached, if not to have adopted, the common sense view of mathematics.<sup>2</sup> He divides "all the objects of human reason or inquiry" into relations of ideas and matters of fact; and under relations of ideas he includes the sciences of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, "and in short, every affirmation, which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain."<sup>3</sup> The propositions of mathe-

<sup>1</sup> P. 352.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 107, 108, above.

<sup>3</sup> P. 20; cf. p. 22, 135.

matics, he holds, "are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence upon what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths, demonstrated by EUCLID, would for ever retain their certainty and evidence."<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing statement summarizes Hume's treatment of mathematics in the *Inquiry*. It corresponds to the epistemological account in the *Treatise*. Both the logical and psychological accounts are omitted in the later work. Naturally, therefore, it has been almost universally supposed that there is a fundamental difference between the doctrine of mathematics in the *Inquiry* and that in the *Treatise*. The supposition, however, is without foundation. Had the logical and psychological accounts not been omitted, it is practically certain that the position of both works, on this question, would have been identical. But why are these accounts omitted? it may be asked; does not this fact in itself indicate a change of view? Not necessarily, for Hume was here giving a popular exposition of the more easy and interesting parts of his system, and he reserved mathematics for special treatment on another occasion. Later, he wrote an essay on "The Metaphysical Principles of Geometry," but did not publish it, because Lord Stanhope convinced him that "either there was some defect in the argument, or in its perspicuity."<sup>2</sup> Even in default of this essay, there are several incidental references in the *Inquiry* which go far to prove that his view of mathematics is still essentially the same as that presented in the *Treatise*.

<sup>1</sup> P. 22; cf. pp. 10 n., 28, 37, 50, 51, 134.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 96, 97, above.

Arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are not *a priori* sciences, but empirical. For Hume, in accordance with his principle that all ideas are copies of impressions, states explicitly that "the ideas of the mathematical sciences, being sensible," are always clear and determinate.<sup>1</sup> "All the ideas of quantity," he thinks,<sup>2</sup> "upon which mathematicians reason, are nothing but particular, and such as are suggested by the senses and imagination." Since, therefore, the mathematical sciences are empirical, they are not absolutely or *a priori* certain. "One may safely, . . . affirm," says Hume,<sup>3</sup> "that if we consider [the moral and mathematical sciences] in a perfect light, their advantages and disadvantages nearly compensate each other, and reduce both of them to a state of equality." The general view just indicated will be confirmed by a special consideration of geometry,—that branch of mathematics being treated somewhat more fully than is arithmetic or algebra.

It has already been shown<sup>4</sup> that although Hume, in the Inquiry, omitted the treatment of space and time, yet his doctrine of space and time is similar in both works. It is not surprising, therefore, that he looks upon geometry as an empirical science. His position, as stated in section iv, corresponds with that of Hobbes. His meaning is, that "the truths" demonstrated by Euclid "for ever retain their certainty and evidence," after knowledge of the geometrical figures has once been acquired. Since, however, all geometrical figures are sensible, a knowledge of them is derived only through sense experience. In short, geometry is an inductive science. But it differs from

<sup>1</sup> P. 50.<sup>2</sup> P. 129 n.<sup>3</sup> P. 50.<sup>4</sup> Pp. 95-97.



other inductive sciences in the fact that one instance serves as a sufficient basis for a generalization. "The conclusions, which [reason] draws from considering one circle, are the same which it would form upon surveying all the circles in the universe."<sup>1</sup> Kant, it is true, mistakenly supposed Hume to regard geometry—or rather mathematics—as an analytical science. For this opinion, indeed, Hume gave some ground when he affirmed that the equality of the square on the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle to the squares on the two sides was a relation, "discoverable by the mere operation of thought." But he explained his meaning when he declared that this relation could not "be known, let the terms be ever so exactly defined, without a train of reasoning and inquiry."<sup>2</sup>

Not only is geometry, as treated in the later work, an empirical science, but it is not a perfectly exact science. In the editions of 1748 and 1751, in a note appended to the twelfth section, Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> "In general, we may pronounce, that the ideas of *greater*, *less*, or *equal*, which are the chief objects of geometry, are far from being so exact or determinate as to be the foundation of such extraordinary inferences [as those arising from the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of space]. Ask a mathematician what he means, when he pronounces two quantities to be equal, and he must say, that the idea of *equality* is one of those, which cannot be defined, and that it is sufficient to place two equal qualities before any one, in order to suggest it. Now this is an appeal to the general appearances of objects to the imagination or senses, and consequently

<sup>1</sup> P. 37; cf. Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> P. 134.

<sup>3</sup> P. 129 n.

can never afford conclusions so directly contrary to these faculties." This passage was omitted after the edition of 1751, but the remainder of the note was retained. It contains the following sentences: "If this be admitted [that there is no such thing as abstract or general ideas] (as seems reasonable) it follows that all the ideas of quantity, upon which mathematicians reason, are nothing but particular, and such as are suggested by the senses and imagination, and consequently cannot be infinitely divisible. It is sufficient to have dropped this hint at present, without prosecuting it any farther." Now if all the ideas of quantity are "nothing but particular, and such as are suggested by the senses and imagination," it is evident that geometry is not a perfectly exact science. That it contains "contradictions and absurdities," Hume explicitly affirms, if it be assumed that there are general ideas. He denies the assumption, however, and in that manner thinks to escape the contradictions. Yet his attempt to do this in the essay on "The Metaphysical Principles of Geometry" does not appear to have been successful.

Finally, it must be observed, that although Hume, in the Inquiry, omitted a specific criticism of reason and the senses, he said enough to indicate that the logical treatment of mathematics was omitted in the later work, not because he had changed his opinions on this subject, but because no "durable good or benefit to society" could be expected to result from such criticism.<sup>1</sup> Thus he asserts:<sup>2</sup> "The chief objection against all *abstract* reasonings is derived from the ideas of space and time; ideas, which, in common life

<sup>1</sup> P. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 128, 129.

and to a careless view, are very clear and intelligible, but when they pass through the scrutiny of the profound sciences . . . afford principles, which seem full of obscurity and contradiction. . . . The demonstration of these principles seems as unexceptionable as that which proves the three angles of a triangle to be equal to two right ones, though the latter opinion be natural and easy, and the former big with contradiction and absurdity. Reason here seems to be thrown into a kind of amazement and suspense, . . . She sees a full light, which illuminates certain places; but that light borders upon the most profound darkness. And between these she is so dazzled and confounded, that she scarcely can pronounce with certainty and assurance concerning any one object." Even with regard to "the skeptical objections" to the reasonings concerning matters of fact, the author declares that, "while the skeptic insists upon these topics, he shows his force, or rather, indeed, his own and our weakness; and seems, for the time at least, to destroy all assurance and conviction."<sup>1</sup> But of course, as before, nature comes to the assistance of reason. The great subverter of "excessive skepticism" is action. Nature is always too strong for principle.<sup>2</sup> An evident implication of these passages is that although the mathematical sciences possess empirical certainty, no science possesses absolute or *a priori* certainty.

It is now manifest that Hume's view of mathematics, in the Inquiry, is substantially the same as that in the Treatise. Arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are not *a priori* sciences, but empirical; for "the

<sup>1</sup> P. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

ideas" of "the mathematical sciences," having been derived from impressions, are "sensible."<sup>1</sup> Arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are not absolutely or *a priori* certain sciences, for the advantages and disadvantages of the mathematical and moral sciences "nearly compensate each other, and reduce both of them to a state of equality."<sup>2</sup> And geometry is not a perfectly exact science, for "all the ideas of quantity, . . . are nothing but particular, and such as are suggested by the senses and imagination."<sup>3</sup> But Hume says that arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are "intuitively or demonstratively certain."<sup>4</sup> Very true; this is in his epistemological account. He made the same statement in the Treatise. He does not mean, of course, that the mathematical sciences are *a priori* intuitively or demonstratively certain. But he asserts that propositions in mathematics "are discoverable by the mere operation of thought."<sup>5</sup> Yes, he means after the ideas have been derived from sensible objects. Yet he also affirms, that "the only objects of the abstract sciences or of demonstration are quantity and number";<sup>6</sup> that these sciences are a "more perfect species of knowledge"<sup>7</sup> than are matters of fact; and that they are "the only proper objects of knowledge and demonstration."<sup>8</sup> In all these statements Hume, from his point of view, is perfectly correct. It is the traditional philosopher who is in error in inferring from them *a priori* exactness and certainty, through reading the thoughts of rationalism into the words of Hume.

§ 25. *References to Mathematics in Hume's other*

<sup>1</sup> P. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> P. 129 n.

<sup>4</sup> P. 20.

<sup>5</sup> P. 21.

<sup>6</sup> P. 133.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> P. 134.



*Philosophical Works*.—It avails little to appeal to Hume's other philosophical writings for additional information on this subject. Yet if such reference be made, it tends, on the whole, to confirm the conclusion that has already been arrived at. In the *Treatise of the Passions* the author states:<sup>1</sup> "The conclusions [concerning the relations of ideas] are equally just, when we discover the equality of two bodies by a pair of compasses, as when we learn it by a mathematical demonstration; and though in the one case the proofs be demonstrative, and in the other only sensible, yet generally speaking, the mind acquiesces with equal assurance in the one as in the other." In the *Treatise of Morals*,<sup>2</sup> "If you assert, that vice and virtue consist in relations susceptible of certainty and demonstration, you must confine yourself to those four relations, which alone admit of that degree of evidence." In the *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*,<sup>3</sup> "It would be absurd . . . to infer, that the perception of beauty, like that of truth in general problems, consists wholly in the perception of relations, and was performed entirely by the understanding or intellectual faculties." In the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*,<sup>4</sup> "Let the errors and deceits of our very senses be set before us; the insuperable difficulties, which attend first principles in all systems; the contradictions, which adhere to the very ideas of matter, cause and effect, extension, space, time, motion; and in a word, quantity of all kinds, the object of the only science, that can fairly pretend to any certainty or evidence." In short, the statements in the treatise on *The Passions* and in the *Dialogues* imply that the

<sup>1</sup> II, p. 223.    <sup>2</sup> II, p. 240.    <sup>3</sup> IV, p. 263.    <sup>4</sup> II, p. 381.

mathematical sciences are empirical, and that geometry is not exact; but those in the treatises on *Morals* do not seem to have exactly the same implication, although they have not necessarily a contrary one.

The difference just noticed between the statements on mathematics in the treatise of *The Passions* and the *Dialogues*, and in the treatises on *Morals* is easily explained. Not only was Hume exceedingly indefinite in his use of terms, but he did not recognize the same criterion of truth when discussing theoretical subjects, as when discussing practical subjects. Replying to Elliot,—who held that “an instinctive feeling” in the intellectual part of one’s nature, “resembling the moral instinct in the moral part,” corrects over refinement of subtlety or speculation,—he wrote:<sup>1</sup> “Your notion of correcting subtlety of sentiment, is certainly very just with regard to morals, which depend upon sentiment; and in politics and natural philosophy, whatever conclusion is contrary to certain matters of fact, must certainly be wrong, and there must some error lie somewhere in the argument, whether we be able to show it or not. But in metaphysics or theology, I cannot see how either of these plain and obvious standards of truth can have place. Nothing there can correct bad reasoning but good reasoning. And sophistry must be opposed by syllogisms.”

§ 26. *Conclusion*.—The results of the discussion may be summarized as follows:—

1. The Faculties of Mind.—The more important mental faculties recognized by Hume are sensation, memory, imagination, reason, reflection, and instinct.

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 324.

He did not systematically classify, nor accurately define them. He often experienced difficulty in describing what he had in mind, and used, in both works, not only a variety of terms, but also, at different times, different terms to express the same thing. Most notably is this the case with regard to imagination and instinct. Knowledge begins with sensation. Memory, imagination, and reason represent different stages of the same process. Reflection is a peculiar mixture of thinking and feeling. Instinct is not definable. It is often identified with imagination, habit, custom, or nature, and includes all those processes that cannot otherwise be explained.

The only significant change, in the Inquiry, occurs in the treatment of instinct. Here Hume takes a place among modern psychologists. Instinct, having encroached on the domains of imagination, habit, and custom, becomes the faculty, *par excellence*. It manifests itself, at least by implication, below the level of consciousness, as tendencies to react upon the environment. It subsists side by side with sensation, memory, imagination, and reason, as impulses to action, and it appears at the higher end of consciousness, transcending reason, as the ultimate ends of action, ends for which reason can assign no reason.<sup>1</sup> In this last sense, instincts—according to Hume,—or ideals of reason—according to the rationalistic philosophers,—are the assertion of the whole mind, the expression of the entire life of the individual. As such, they vary according to the stage of development of the person, of the community, of the nation, of the race. As people advance in civilization, contradictions natu-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Everett, *Essays: Theological and Literary*, chs. I, VII.

rally and necessarily arise between imagination and reason, and between reason and instinct. Hume saw clearly that, in a world of progress, the solution of all the contradictions of human experience is absolutely impossible. And he does not seem to have been far from the right track when he regarded the solution of these contradictions, so far as that is possible, to lie largely within the functions of imagination and instinct. In the treatment of his problem, however, he soon encountered insuperable difficulties, because biology, which opens the ante-room of psychology, was unable to lift the latch, being only in its infancy in his day.

2. *Intuitive Knowledge.*—In the *Treatise*, intuitive, or sense and memory knowledge is based on the philosophical relations of resemblance, contrariety, and degrees of quality, and arises immediately from the observation, or comparison of impressions and ideas. It is not necessarily exact, nor certain, but is conditioned by the nature of the object observed, and the capacity of the mind observing. In the *Inquiry*, the classification of philosophical relations is omitted, and naturally also a treatment of intuitive knowledge; yet on this latter question, Hume's view, by implication, seems to be the same as formerly.

3. *Demonstrative Knowledge.*—Mathematics, or knowledge developed by reason, is based on the philosophical relation of proportions in number and quantity. In the *Treatise*, Hume gave three different, although not distinct or separate expositions of mathematics: an epistemological account in Parts II and III, a logical, and a psychological account in Part IV. According to the epistemological account, mathematics



is an empirical science, because the ideas of number and quantity are derived from the senses; arithmetic and algebra are perfectly exact and certain sciences, because they possess a "precise standard"; but geometry is not an exact or certain science, because its first principles are based upon the general appearances of objects to the senses and imagination. According to the logical account, "all knowledge degenerates into probability," and would at last, were it not for the influence of custom, result in "a total extinction of belief and evidence." The psychological account professes to show how judgments in the mathematical sciences, like those in any other science, retain a certain amount of assurance. Custom, or imagination, or instinct, or nature determines one by "an absolute and uncontrollable necessity" to judge and to believe, as well as to breathe and feel. The degree of belief attending the judgment is, of course, greater in short and simple problems than in long and intricate ones. But in all cases, the quality or character of belief is the same, belief being "more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures."

In the Inquiry the logical and psychological accounts of mathematics are omitted. Hence, it has been the common opinion that Hume, in the later work, regarded mathematics as an absolutely certain science, based on *a priori* principles. And since, in the brief epistemological account that is given, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry seem to stand on an equal footing, the rationalistic philosophers, in accordance with their favorite presuppositions, naturally thought that Hume had elevated geometry to the rank of an exact science. On the contrary, how-

ever, the facts of the matter are, that he first regarded arithmetic and algebra as being on an empirical basis equally with geometry, and later modified his epistemological account to such an extent as to show that mathematics is not an absolutely certain science, and that geometry is not a perfectly exact one.

The four questions proposed at the beginning of the discussion are now answered. (1) According to Hume, mathematics is not an *a priori* science; (2) it is not an absolutely certain science; (3) geometry is not a perfectly exact science; and (4) this seems to be the position of both the Treatise and Inquiry. It only remains yet to add a remark explanatory of the fourth answer, for as here stated, it is liable to misconception. Although it is true that, in neither work, is mathematics an *a priori*, or an absolutely certain science, nor is geometry a perfectly exact one; it does not follow, by any means, that the general positions of the two works, on this subject, are identical. Logically, they are; actually, they are not. Although the doctrine is essentially the same in the Inquiry as in the Treatise, the statement of it, as has repeatedly been pointed out, is quite different. And in this case, the difference in statement is so great that, without implying any change of view on the part of the author, it produces a very remarkable change in the tone and attitude of the book. While the doctrine of the Treatise is stated fully and boldly, that of the Inquiry is expressed briefly and hesitatingly. Yet the differences in the later work are only of such a nature as can easily be explained. They arise from the omission of the logical and psychological accounts of mathematics. And these omissions were made be-

cause: (1) Hume aimed, in the Inquiry, to give a brief and popular exposition of his theory of knowledge; (2) he intended to deal with mathematics at some future time; and (3) he thought that no "durable good or benefit to society" could be expected to result from a detailed statement of the skeptical objections against reason or the senses.

When Hume maintains that mathematics is an empirical science, and consequently, not possessed of absolute or *a priori* certainty, he is indubitably right. But when, through his failure to perceive that the fundamental characteristic of general ideas is the epistemological element, he contends that geometry is not a perfectly exact science, he is unquestionably wrong. As Aristotle held that, in any science, one should expect only that degree of accuracy which is conformable to the nature of the subject; so Hume held that the different sciences, being all empirical, admit of varying degrees of exactness and certainty, according to the nature of the subject-matter. But Hume, again like Aristotle, did not succeed, in all respects, in carrying out his principle. The limitations of his time, and his own psychical predisposition—his visualizing imagination,—were obstacles too great for his philosophical genius entirely to overcome.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE IDEA OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

§ 27. *Causation the Basis of Reasoning Concerning Matters of Fact.*—The idea of causation has been an object of reflection ever since the dawn of rational speculation, and the validity of belief in causality has frequently been questioned throughout the history of philosophical inquiry. Egyptian and Jewish, Hindoo and Persian, Greek and Roman,—all historical races have had their distinctive representatives of empiricism and skepticism. It is in English philosophy, however, by intensely practical men, that the idea of cause and effect has been subjected to the most searching examination. Glanvill affirmed emphatically, that necessary connection is not perceivable by the senses. Hobbes, Locke, and Berkeley followed, more or less closely, along the same line of Pyrrhonism. They prepared the way for Hume. And although Hume, in his criticism of the idea of cause and effect, did little more, perhaps, than sum up and present in a new form the logical results of his predecessors' reflection; nevertheless, to him belongs the distinctive honor of being the first philosophical writer, who gave a final analysis of the conception of causality from the standpoint of pure empiricism. Hume's examination of the idea of cause and effect is not only an invaluable contribution to speculative thought, but also an imperishable monument to the intellectual acumen and subtle analytical power of one of the greatest of the many keen thinkers of Scotland.



Cause and substance are the two poles of the philosophy of human nature. Having treated intuitive knowledge and demonstrative, Hume proceeded to deal with that division of probability which he calls proofs, reasoning proper, moral, or experiential. This species of reasoning is conversant with matters of fact. It is not, like intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, founded on the relations of resemblance, contrariety, degrees of quality, and proportions in number or quantity; for since the contrary of matters of fact is conceivable, and therefore possible, knowledge of them is not obtained by means of reason. Nevertheless, the "arguments" in experiential, or empirical reasoning are regarded as being "entirely free from doubt and uncertainty."<sup>1</sup>

All reasoning is of the nature of comparison. In comparison, one of the two objects compared, or neither, or both may be present to the senses or memory.<sup>2</sup> If neither object is present, the reasoning is purely hypothetical.<sup>3</sup> This statement is analogous to Kant's famous dictum, "concepts without percepts are empty." When the two objects are present to the senses or memory, the act is called "perception rather than reasoning." Similarly Kant said that "percepts without concepts are blind." When the two objects are present to sense or memory, the comparison is based on the relations of identity and contiguity.<sup>4</sup> But in instances of comparison when only one object is present to the senses or memory, there is a conclusion drawn beyond experience. This is reasoning proper, or experiential reasoning. Its basis

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 423.<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 376, 384, 385; IV, p. 39.<sup>3</sup> I, pp. 384, 385, 390; IV, p. 39.<sup>4</sup> I, p. 376.

is the relation of cause and effect.<sup>1</sup> In order, therefore, to discover the evidence for reasoning concerning matters of fact; that is, to learn the rational ground of experiential reasoning, it is necessary to examine the idea of cause and effect.<sup>2</sup>

§ 28. *Examination of the Idea of Cause and Effect.*—The treatment of causation, in the two works, although similar in form, differs much in detail. In the *Treatise*, the discussion is exceedingly thorough, systematic, and ingenious. In the *Inquiry*, on the other hand, it is brief and comparatively simple;—chiefly, no doubt, because Hume was afraid that should he “multiply words about it, or throw it into a greater variety of lights, it would only become more obscure and intricate.”<sup>3</sup> Pfleiderer<sup>4</sup> states that the argument in the *Treatise*, like that on causation in Kant’s *Kritik*, proceeds analytically, while the reasoning in the *Inquiry*, as in the *Prolegomena*, proceeds synthetically. Rather it should be said, that the argument in both cases is essentially analytical, but in the later work the analysis is less prominent than in the earlier.

In accordance with his usual method of argumentation, Hume, in both works, opens the discussion by inquiring after the origin of the idea.<sup>5</sup> On this line of attack upon rationalism he had often won, and he again feels confident of achieving his wonted success. In the *Inquiry*, he states briefly, and then proceeds to prove, that the knowledge of the relation of cause and effect is not attained by intuitive perception, nor

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 376; IV, p. 24.    <sup>2</sup> I, p. 377; IV, p. 24.    <sup>3</sup> P. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 169 and n.

<sup>5</sup> I, p. 377; IV, p. 24.

by *a priori* reasoning, "but arises entirely from experience."<sup>1</sup> In the Treatise, Hume is at his best in the discussion of causation. Slowly and thoroughly he prepares for an exhaustive analysis of his problem, and then, with rare skill and subtle penetration, he winds his tortuous way through an argument of nearly one hundred pages, until finally he reaches his intended goal. It may be thought that the idea of cause and effect is derived by means of the senses, or by means of reason, or by means of a supra-natural power, or by means of the imagination. These are the only possible sources; and Hume examines them all. He first asserts that the impression of causation is not perceived as a quality of objects; consequently, the idea "must be derived from some *relation* among objects."<sup>2</sup> Next he inquires what relations are discoverable between objects that are "considered as causes or effects." These are two: (1) contiguity, (2) succession.<sup>3</sup> It is supposed, however, that there is still another element in causation, viz., necessary connection; that is, that there is a necessary connection between objects or events that are causally related. Moreover, it is the element of necessary connection which is always regarded as the essential part of causality. Hence this is the peculiar problem to be investigated.<sup>4</sup> But necessary connection among objects or events is not perceived by the senses either as a quality, or as a relation. Then Hume deems it advisable "to leave the direct survey" of the question, and "beat about all the neighboring fields." In this manner he hopes to find "a hint" that may serve to clear up the difficulty.<sup>5</sup> He soon discovers a clue

<sup>1</sup>Pp. 24, 25. <sup>2</sup>P. 377. <sup>3</sup>Pp. 377, 378. <sup>4</sup>P. 379. <sup>5</sup>P. 380.

in two questions bearing on the subject, one the general question of causation, the other the particular question. These two questions he then examines in succession; whereupon, he comes back to the point at which he turned aside, and deals directly with the idea of necessary connection. Accordingly, the treatment of the relation of cause and effect falls into three main divisions:—

I. The general question of causation.<sup>1</sup>

II. The particular question of causation.<sup>2</sup>

III. The idea of necessary connection.<sup>3</sup>

The accounts in both works may be examined together.

I. The general Question of Causation. The general question of causation is stated in the *Treatise* as follows:<sup>4</sup> "For what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, should also have a cause?" and in the *Inquiry*:<sup>5</sup> "What is the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning [the relation of cause and effect]?" These two questions, though differently expressed, are essentially the same. Huxley<sup>6</sup> asserts that the evidence by which Hume supports his conclusion in the *Inquiry*, concerning the general question of causation, "is not strictly relevant to the issue." And several writers<sup>7</sup> state that he omits al-

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 380–383; IV, pp. 24–38.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 383–422; IV, 24–47.

<sup>3</sup> I, pp. 450–466; IV, pp. 50–65.

<sup>4</sup> P. 380.

<sup>5</sup> P. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Hume, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Selby-Bigge, *Hume's Enquiries*, Introd.; Ueberweg-Heinze, *Gesch. d. Phil.*, III, p. 201; Riehl, *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, p. 114 and n.; Vaihinger, *Kommentar zu Kant's Kritik*, I, pp. 347, 349.



together the consideration of this question in the later work. Now it may be admitted that part, at least, of the evidence by which he supports his conclusion in the Inquiry is not strictly relevant. But it is contended that the two questions, as above stated, are for Hume's purposes practically equivalent.<sup>1</sup> They imply each other in such a manner that the answer to both is the same.

In the Treatise, the author professes to show that neither intuition, nor demonstration,—neither the senses and memory, nor thought and reasoning—is the ground of the opinion that every effect must have a cause. For if the necessity of a cause for every effect could be intuitively perceived, or could be demonstrated by reason, the contrary would be inconceivable. But that the contrary is not inconceivable, he claims to prove by the following argument:<sup>2</sup> “As all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, it will be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle.” Accordingly, he concludes that the opinion of the necessity of a cause for every effect arises wholly from “observation and experience.”<sup>3</sup> In the Inquiry,<sup>4</sup> Hume asserts that “the knowledge” of the relation of cause and effect “is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings *a priori*,” nor by the intuitive perception of the qualities of objects, “but arises entirely from experience.” His chief argument is similar to that in the Treatise:

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Caird, *The Critical Phil. of Kant*, I, p. 133 n.; Jahn, *D. H. Causalitätstheorie*, pp. 6, 41.

<sup>2</sup>P. 381.

<sup>3</sup>P. 383.

<sup>4</sup>P. 24.

"Every effect is a distinct event from its cause."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it follows that "there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connection."<sup>2</sup> Of course when one abandons the atomistic view of mind, the *petitio principii* in this reasoning becomes obvious. But on Hume's presuppositions the argument is perfectly valid. If "every effect is a distinct event from its cause," or if it is easy "to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle," there is no real necessity to think that every effect must have a cause; and the supposed necessity, so far as it exists, must be explained on the ground of experience.

The next question should naturally be, how experience gives rise to the opinion, that "whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence?"<sup>3</sup> But in the Treatise, Hume finds it "more convenient to sink this question" in the particular problem of causation, remarking: "It will, perhaps, be found in the end, that the same answer will serve for both." And in the Inquiry, instead of asking how experience gives rise to the principle that every event must have a cause? he asks a related question, viz., "What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience?"<sup>4</sup> These two questions, that of the Treatise and that of the Inquiry, may now be considered.

II. The particular Question of Causation. The particular question of causation resolves itself into

<sup>1</sup> P. 27.<sup>2</sup> P. 52.<sup>3</sup> P. 383.<sup>4</sup> P. 28.

three parts:<sup>1</sup> (1) "Why we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects?" (2) "What is the nature of that inference we draw from the one to the other?" (3) What is the nature of "the *belief*" we repose in the inferred idea? The last of these problems will be left for consideration in the following chapter. The first question does not receive separate treatment, but is dealt with incidentally in connection with the second, Hume making the characteristic remark: "Perhaps it will appear in the end, that the necessary connection depends on the inference, instead of the inference depending on the necessary connection."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the subject of immediate interest is the second division of the particular question of causation, viz., "Why we form an inference from one [instance] to another?" And this question, it may be noted, resolves itself into that of the Inquiry at present under investigation; for the reason or ground on which we form an inference from one instance to another *is*, according to Hume, "the foundation of all conclusions from experience."

The argument may now be presented in two forms, as the mode of reasoning is not exactly the same in both works. This change of method, however, seems to have arisen from Hume's different ways of stating the problem, or perhaps from his desire for brevity of treatment in the Inquiry. In the Treatise,<sup>3</sup> the author gives a brief account of experience, professing to show how, from the observation of antecedent and consequent in a number of particular instances, the idea of cause and effect gradually arises. The infer-

<sup>1</sup>I, pp. 380, 383.<sup>2</sup>I, p. 389.<sup>3</sup>Pp. 388, 389.

ence, therefore, from cause to effect, or from effect to cause is a transition of the mind from "a present impression of sense or memory" to a related idea. And the transition is founded, not on such a penetration into the "essences" of objects "as may discover the dependence of the one upon the other," but on past experience. Then the question occurs, whether the transition is produced by reason, or by imagination?<sup>1</sup> Were it produced by reason, it would be based on the principle of the uniformity of nature. Hence the following question presents itself, what is the ground of the principle of the uniformity of nature? This principle is not established on intuitive knowledge, nor on demonstrative,—that is, it is not derived from the senses, nor from reason,—because a change in the course of nature is conceivable. Neither is it derived from probability, for probability is founded upon it. Rather it arises from constant conjunction or custom, and is, therefore, an assumption that can never be proved.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the transition or inference is not produced by reason, but by imagination, by means of the two primary laws of association, resemblance and contiguity, that is, through the repetition of similar instances or custom.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Inquiry, all conclusions from experience "proceed upon the supposition, that the future will be conformable to the past."<sup>5</sup> But then it must be asked, as before, what is the ground of the principle of the uniformity of nature? This principle does not rest upon demonstrative arguments,

<sup>1</sup>P. 390.<sup>2</sup>P. 391.<sup>3</sup>Pp. 392, 431, 545.<sup>4</sup>*Cf.* pp. 390, 393, 403, 414, 459, 461, 471, 509.<sup>5</sup>Pp. 29, 31, 33.



since a change in the course of nature implies no contradiction.<sup>1</sup> Neither does it rest upon probable reasoning or arguments from experience, since "all these arguments" are founded on the principle of the uniformity of nature.<sup>2</sup> This principle is merely an assumption, a product of the imagination which arises from the constant conjunction of similar instances.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, "the foundation of all conclusions from experience" is constant conjunction and custom.<sup>4</sup> Hence these two forms of the argument are ultimately one and the same. Constant or customary conjunction of resembling objects has such an influence upon the imagination, that on the appearance of one the mind passes on to the thought of the other; or as otherwise put, resembling impressions and ideas that have been constantly conjoined introduce one another, so that the repetition of similar instances carries the mind beyond actual experience, and causes it to expect similar instances in the future under similar conditions. Inference, therefore, is not an act of intuition,—of sense perception,—nor a process of demonstration, but is a transition of the imagination produced by custom. "The foundation of all conclusions from experience" also, is ultimately custom or habit. The nature of custom, however, the author professes, in each work, not to explain. It is a species of instinct, or "a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects."<sup>5</sup> But as in the case of the principles of association of ideas, no explanation of

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 31, 33. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> Pp. 30, 32, 33. <sup>4</sup> Pp. 36, 37, 39, 40.

<sup>5</sup> I, pp. 471, 475; IV, pp. 37, 40, 131.

it can be given, except that furnished by experience and analogy.<sup>1</sup>

It is now manifest that, in his treatment of the particular question of causation, Hume has answered—at least after his own fashion—the question in the *Treatise* for which the particular one was substituted, viz., how experience gives rise to the principle that “every thing whose existence has a beginning should also have a cause?” He had formerly shown that this principle is a conclusion from experience;<sup>2</sup> now he has explained the nature of inference, or experiential reasoning; therefore, he has shown, how experience gives rise to the principle that every event must have a cause.<sup>3</sup> He has answered this question in the *Inquiry* also. In the *Inquiry* he asked, what is the foundation of all conclusions from experience? Therefore he asked, at least by implication, what is the foundation of the principle that every event must have a cause?—that principle being a conclusion from experience. And to explain that “the foundation of all conclusions from experience” is constant conjunction and custom, is equivalent to showing how experience gives rise to the principle that every event must have a cause. This mode of handling the matter is certainly ingenious. Under the form of many questions, Hume arranged the argument to suit his convenience, and implicitly assumed one of the main points to be proved.<sup>4</sup> To this assumption, of course, he was fully entitled, according to the fundamental principles of his system of philosophy. And it may

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* I, pp. 321, 330, 392, 393, 471; IV, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>*Cf.* p. 144, above.

<sup>3</sup>*Cf.* I, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup>*Cf.* I, pp. 380, 381, 383, 385, 390; IV, pp. 24, 27, 30, 31.

be noted that, on discarding this assumption, viz., that all perceptions are distinct and separable, Hume's position, although bereft of one of its conspicuous supports, is, in its essential import, or with but slight modifications, perfectly valid.

Logically, the next question for discussion is the third part of the particular question of causation, viz., the nature of belief. But as it seems advisable to devote a chapter to this topic, we pass on to the last general division, that is, necessary connection.

III. The Idea of Necessary Connection.—In the fourteenth section of Part III of the *Treatise*, and in the seventh section of the *Inquiry*, Hume returns to the question which was left unanswered at the beginning of the discussion, and which was supposed to be conversant with the chief element of the idea of cause and effect, viz., the question of necessary connection.<sup>1</sup> But having answered, in the manner that he did, the first two questions—the general one, and the particular one,—he has practically answered the third, that of necessary connection. For if nothing is known about causation except what is derived from experience, and if the ultimate ground of experience is custom, or instinct, then there is no element of necessity, as commonly understood, in the idea of cause and effect. As Hume asserts:<sup>2</sup> “The necessary connection betwixt causes and effects is the foundation of our inference from one to the other. The foundation of our inference is the transition arising from the accustomed union. These are, therefore, the same.” Thus he arrives by a process of reasoning at a conclusion similar to the assumption with which he had started out:

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 460.

“As all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, it will be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle.”<sup>1</sup> So far as we know, therefore, or are capable of knowing, objects or events are related only by means of association and custom. Hence Hume, in explaining necessary connection, has really explained it away. Necessity exists only in the mind, not in objects. “Either we have no idea of necessity,” he says,<sup>2</sup> “or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects, and from effects to causes, according to their experienced union.” It might only remain now for Hume to show how the fiction of necessary connection has arisen. But as he has just examined “one of the most sublime questions in philosophy,” he thinks it may be advisable to give a fuller account of his doctrine. For that reason, he brings forward some additional arguments to show that the idea is invalid. The two topics will be treated separately.

1. The idea of necessary connection is invalid. As usual, in testing the validity of any idea, Hume brings forward his “articles of inquisition,” and demands from what impression the idea of necessary connection is derived?<sup>3</sup> It is not derived by means of the senses, from the observation of objects, because the only relations perceivable among objects are contiguity and succession.<sup>4</sup> It is not derived by means of thought

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 381; IV, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 460; IV, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 450; IV, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



or reasoning, because reason can produce no new idea.<sup>1</sup> And it is not derived from a "supreme spirit" or the operations of "deity," as the Cartesians held, for the doctrine of innate ideas has been rejected, and power is not discoverable in spirit any more than in body.<sup>2</sup> These are the main arguments adduced, and thus far the reasoning, in both works, though different in form, is identical in import.

In the *Treatise*, however, Hume incidentally admitted that if the idea of power were once acquired, power might be attributed to "an unknown quality."<sup>3</sup> This admission seems to have been seized upon by his opponents as a point of vantage, for an additional argument was introduced in the appendix to refute those who assert "that we feel an energy, or power, in our own mind," and then "transfer that quality to matter." "But to convince us how fallacious this reasoning is," says Hume,<sup>4</sup> "we need only consider, that the will being here considered as a cause, has no more a discoverable connection with its effects, than any material cause has with its proper effect. So far from perceiving the connection betwixt an act of volition, and a motion of the body; it is allowed that no effect is more inexplicable than the powers and essences of thought and matter. Nor is the empire of the will over our mind more intelligible. . . . In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 452; IV, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 454, 455; IV, pp. 58, 59, 60.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 455.

<sup>4</sup> I, p. 455; cf. p. 541 for a verbal contradiction of the last sentence.

it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have." This argument was again brought forward in the Inquiry, and presented with considerable fulness of detail.<sup>1</sup> Its importance was probably overlooked, or underestimated in the earlier work. This is one of the very few instances in which there is any development in the Inquiry, of Hume's doctrine. Otherwise the argument has little significance, for it had been implied in the Treatise.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion of the reasoning in both books is exactly the same, viz., one never has an impression of power or necessary connection, and consequently cannot obtain a valid idea of it.

2. How the Fiction of necessary connection arises. It is thought, however, that one has an idea of power, or of necessary connection between objects or events; hence, the author's next task is to account for this fiction. Concerning the origin of the idea, the explanation of the two works is identical.<sup>3</sup> It is briefly as follows: One event is observed to follow another immediately; when this instance of two events in immediate succession has been repeated a number of times, the repetition, through custom, or instinct, produces a new sentiment or feeling, an impression of reflection; and this impression of reflection gives rise to the idea of power or necessary connection. "Necessity, then," says Hume,<sup>4</sup> "is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another." Thus the idea of power or necessary connection is a product of the imagination.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 54-57.

<sup>2</sup> P. 455.

<sup>3</sup> I, pp. 457, 458; IV, pp. 61, 62. <sup>4</sup> I, p. 459; cf. IV, p. 63.

In the Treatise,<sup>1</sup> the author expressed an apprehension that although his "foregoing reasoning" appeared to him "the shortest and most decisive imaginable," yet "with the generality of readers" the bias of the mind to regard necessary connection as something objective would prevail, and give them a prejudice against his doctrine. This bias he explained in the following manner:<sup>2</sup> "It is a common observation, that the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions which they occasion, and which always make their appearance at the same time that these objects discover themselves to the senses. . . . The same propensity is the reason, why we suppose necessity and power to lie in the objects we consider, not in our mind, that considers them." These remarks are omitted in the Inquiry. But the omission is not significant, since the same explanation of the bias of mind here referred to is implied in a foot-note,<sup>3</sup> and is again stated in *The Natural History of Religion*.<sup>4</sup>

IV. Conclusion. Hume's account of necessary connection, particularly that in the Treatise, is by no means so simple as might appear from the above statement. The discussion abounds in repetitions, obscurities, and even inconsistencies. Yet the inconsistencies are often verbal rather than real, arising from the use of terms, sometimes purposely, in a loose and popular sense. It is allowed, for instance, that there are powers and operations of nature;<sup>5</sup> also power or efficacy is spoken of as uniting causes and effects.<sup>6</sup> But Hume explains that, "in all these expressions, *so applied*, we have really no distinct meaning, and make

<sup>1</sup> P. 461. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> P. 64. <sup>4</sup> IV, p. 317. <sup>5</sup> P. 462. <sup>6</sup> P. 456.

use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas."<sup>1</sup> Again, the idea of power, of necessity, or of necessary connection is said to arise from a new impression, or determination,<sup>2</sup> from similar instances, or the observation of similar instances,<sup>3</sup> from an internal impression, or impression of reflection,<sup>4</sup> from a propensity,<sup>5</sup> from the repetition of related objects,<sup>6</sup> from habit or custom,<sup>7</sup> and from imagination.<sup>8</sup> If Hume had enjoyed the opportunity of presenting his system of philosophy in the class room, or had experienced the necessity of defending it as he formulated it, he would have been more precise in his use of terms, and more consistent in his form of expression. His various accounts of the derivation of the idea of necessary connection may be summarized briefly as follows: The terms efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connection, and productive quality, "are all nearly synonymous."<sup>9</sup> Repetition,<sup>10</sup> custom,<sup>11</sup> similar instances,<sup>12</sup> constant conjunction,<sup>13</sup> instinct,<sup>14</sup> or imagination<sup>15</sup> produce a determination of the mind, a propensity, habit, customary transition, or impression of reflection. This determination,<sup>16</sup> propensity,<sup>17</sup> habit,<sup>18</sup> customary transition<sup>19</sup>—qualities of perceptions,<sup>20</sup>—or internal impression<sup>21</sup> is equivalent to power, necessity, or necessary connection. The idea

<sup>1</sup> P. 457; cf. IV, p. 29 n.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 450, 451, 463.<sup>3</sup> Pp. 457, 459.<sup>4</sup> P. 460.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>6</sup> P. 461.<sup>7</sup> P. 508.<sup>8</sup> P. 511.<sup>9</sup> I, p. 451; IV, p. 51.<sup>10</sup> I, pp. 450, 461.<sup>11</sup> Pp. 460, 464, 511.<sup>12</sup> P. 459.<sup>13</sup> P. 464.<sup>14</sup> P. 471.<sup>15</sup> Pp. 464, 511.<sup>16</sup> Pp. 451, 459, 460, 461, 463.<sup>17</sup> P. 460.<sup>18</sup> Pp. 429, 508.<sup>19</sup> P. 461.<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>21</sup> Pp. 459, 460.



of power, of necessity, or of necessary connection is a copy of an internal impression, or impression of reflection.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the idea of power, of necessity, or of necessary connection arises immediately or directly from a determination of the mind, propensity, habit, customary transition, internal impression, or the imagination; and mediately or indirectly from repetition of related objects, observation of similar instances, constant conjunction, custom, or instinct.

§ 29. *Misconceptions of Hume's Critics.*—From the above examination of Hume's treatment of the idea of cause and effect, it is evident that the position of both works is substantially identical.<sup>2</sup> There are differences in the manner of statement, it is true, but these do not seem to be significant. Some of Hume's interpreters, however, put forward the claim that, with respect to certain aspects of the question, there are real and important differences in the Inquiry. The opinions of these writers, as well as a few misconceptions of others regarding Hume's view of causality call for some further consideration.

Selby-Bigge<sup>3</sup> also asserts that, in the Inquiry, "the tiguity practically drops out altogether" in "the account of the origin, in particular cases, of the idea of cause and effect"; and that "the account of causation, . . . is left hanging in the air when the support of the theory of succession has been withdrawn." There does not seem to be sufficient ground to warrant these statements. Hume, it is true, affirms that "all

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 454, 460, 463.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 39; Pfeleiderer, *Empirismus u. Skepsis*, p. 169 and n.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, pp. xiii, xv.

arguments from experience are founded on the similarity, which we discover among natural objects, and by which we are induced to expect effects similar to those, which we have found to follow from such objects."<sup>1</sup> In like manner he had expressed himself in the Treatise.<sup>2</sup> The passage just quoted, however, and several others in the Inquiry of a like import, do not mean that the relation of resemblance has now assumed the functions formerly exercised by contiguity and succession in explaining the origin, in particular cases, of the idea of cause and effect. On the contrary, several statements clearly indicate that the relations of contiguity and succession play, respectively, the same rôle here as in the earlier work. Thus Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> "Suppose a person, though endowed with the strongest faculties of reason and reflection, to be brought on a sudden into the world; he would, indeed, immediately observe a continual succession of objects, and one event following another; but he would not be able to discover anything farther. . . . Suppose again, that he has acquired more experience, and has lived so long in the world as to have observed similar objects or events to be constantly conjoined together; what is the consequence of this experience? He immediately infers the existence of one object from the appearance of the other." Also, when speaking of the idea of necessary connection, he says:<sup>4</sup> "All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*." And in

<sup>1</sup> P. 31.<sup>2</sup> P. 391.<sup>3</sup> Pp. 36, 37; cf. pp. 24, 30, 33. <sup>4</sup> P. 61.

a note in the edition of 1751 he made the decisive remark:<sup>1</sup> "A *cause* is different from a *sign*; as it implies precedency and contiguity in time and place, as well as constant conjunction." The fact that contiguity is omitted in the definitions of cause given in the Inquiry is not significant, since the meaning of the word is clearly implied.<sup>2</sup>

Selby-Bigge<sup>3</sup> also asserts that, in the Inquiry, "the distinction between causation as a philosophical and a natural relation is altogether dropped." This statement is not justified. In the Treatise,<sup>4</sup> Hume gave two definitions of cause, one as a philosophical relation, the other as a natural relation. In the Inquiry,<sup>5</sup> he gave two corresponding definitions. These are briefer than those in the Treatise, but they are similar in meaning. For reasons already given,<sup>6</sup> the author omitted in the later work an explicit distinction between natural and philosophical relations. As might be expected, therefore, in the definitions of cause, this distinction, although implied, is not formally expressed. In the section on "Liberty and Necessity," this same distinction is again implied. Hume asserts:<sup>7</sup> "Necessity may be defined two ways, conformably to the two definitions of cause, of which it makes an essential part. It consists either in the constant conjunction of like objects, or in the inference of the understanding from one object to another." That is, necessity, like cause, may be regarded either as a philosophical, or as a natural

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> IV, p. 63; cf. p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, Introd. 'P. 465.

<sup>5</sup> P. 63; cf. Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 80-83.

<sup>7</sup> P. 79.

relation. Selby-Bigge's account of Hume's treatment of causation is somewhat obscure, no doubt owing to brevity of statement. Indeed it hardly appears to be perfectly consistent. For although he says that "contiguity practically drops out altogether" in the account of the origin, in particular cases, of the idea of cause and effect; he also says: "Contiguity, . . . drops out of the Enquiry as a philosophical relation, though it must be supposed to exert its influence as a natural relation."<sup>1</sup> It is sufficient to remark here that Selby-Bigge's distinction between natural and philosophical relations does not exactly conform to that of Hume. Indeed the editor of *Hume's Enquiries* does not seem to be quite free from the bondage of that "relationism" which weighed like a nightmare on the mind of Green, and still vexes sore the souls of his readers.

According to Peterson,<sup>2</sup> the explanatory definition of cause, inserted in edition K of the Inquiry—1753-54—"is identical with the traditional doctrine" of causation. And Selby-Bigge<sup>3</sup> contends that this clause added "in italics can hardly be regarded as a paraphrase or equivalent of the main definition" in the Inquiry. It is usually unfortunate for critics to differ diametrically with their author in the interpretation of his language. In edition K of the Inquiry, after defining cause as a philosophical relation, Hume added the following sentence:<sup>4</sup> "Or, in other words, *where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed.*" Of course, it might seem

<sup>1</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, pp. xv, xvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Phil. Rev.*, Vol. VII, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, Introd.

<sup>4</sup> P. 63.



to a casual observer as if this new definition were "identical with the traditional doctrine" of causation, or at least as if it were not an "equivalent of the main definition in the Inquiry." But Hume regarded it as being identical with his doctrine of causation; it is his own definition of cause expressed "in other words." Furthermore, it may be noted that Hume fairly guarded himself from a mistaken interpretation like that of Peterson or of Selby-Bigge when he remarked, in a note on the succeeding section:<sup>1</sup> "If a cause be defined, *that which produces any thing*; it is easy to observe, that *producing* is synonymous to *causing*. In like manner, if a cause be defined, *that by which anything exists*; this is liable to the same objection. For what is meant by these words, *by which*? Had it been said, that a cause is *that* after which *anything constantly exists*; we should have understood the terms. For this is, indeed, all we know of the matter. And this constancy forms the very essence of necessity, nor have we any other idea of it."

Brede<sup>2</sup> states that, in the Inquiry, there is a higher estimation of the worth of the causal inference than in the Treatise. On the other hand, Selby-Bigge asserts:<sup>3</sup> "The distinction [between natural and philosophical relations] in the Treatise is indeed most bewildering, but, with its disappearance in the Inquiry, the relation of causation becomes more completely subjective." While Peterson<sup>4</sup> affirms that, in the Treatise "the subjective aspect is made still more

<sup>1</sup> P. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xvii; cf. p. xv.

<sup>4</sup> *Phil. Rev.*, Vol. VII, p. 45.

prominent'' than in the Inquiry. The correctness or incorrectness of these conflicting assertions can be shown only by appealing to the author himself. No doubt it is tedious to resort continually to quotations. But there is no other method of dealing with the question under discussion. The subject will be dealt with as briefly as possible. In the Treatise Hume asserts:<sup>1</sup> "We have already taken notice of certain relations, which make us pass from one object to another, even though there be no reason to determine us to that transition; and this we may establish for a general rule, that wherever the mind constantly and uniformly makes a transition without any reason, it is influenced by these relations." The relations are resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect.<sup>2</sup> But cause and effect arises from resemblance and constant conjunction, that is, from resemblance, contiguity, and custom. And the causal inference is produced, not by the relations of resemblance and contiguity simply, but by the repetition of these relations, that is, by custom. Hence Hume says later, "all reasoning concerning matters of fact arises only from custom."<sup>3</sup> In the Inquiry he states:<sup>4</sup> "Though we should conclude, . . . as in the foregoing section, that, in all reasoning from experience, there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding, there is no danger, that these reasonings, . . . will ever be affected by such a discovery. If the mind is not engaged by argument to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and

<sup>1</sup> P. 392.<sup>2</sup> P. 393.<sup>3</sup> P. 487; *cf.* pp. 444, 475.<sup>4</sup> P. 36.

authority." This principle is "custom or habit," a principle which determines one to draw the causal inference when one has lived "so long in the world as to have observed similar objects or events to be constantly conjoined together."<sup>1</sup>

It is now necessary to discover the nature of custom, to learn if it is of "equal weight and authority" with reason. In the *Treatise*, the author does not give any satisfactory account of this principle. In a general way he regards it as the repetition of a number of particular instances,<sup>2</sup> but more specifically, as a quality of mind or mode of activity resulting from the repetition of the same experience.<sup>3</sup> He sometimes uses reasoning synonymously with custom, speaking of it as "a wonderful and unintelligible instinct" in the soul, a principle of nature that is common to man and beast.<sup>4</sup> He even holds custom to be more trustworthy than reason proper, or the understanding. "By the same rule," says Hume,<sup>5</sup> as the skeptic "continues to reason and believe, . . . he must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, . . . Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteemed it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations." Belief in "the existence of body" arises from custom and imagination.<sup>6</sup> In Part IV, it is true, the author—in a criticism of the "faculty, which judges"—professes to reduce, by "the rules of logic," probable reasoning, that is, the causal inference, to "a total extinction of belief and

<sup>1</sup> P. 37.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 458, 459.<sup>3</sup> P. 403.<sup>4</sup> Pp. 470, 471; *cf.* p. 403.<sup>5</sup> P. 478.<sup>6</sup> Pp. 487, 488.

evidence."<sup>1</sup> But he immediately adds: "Should it here be asked me, whether I sincerely assent to this argument, . . . and whether I be really one of those skeptics, who hold that all is uncertain, . . . I should reply, . . . Nature by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connection with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine." Yet, in another place, Hume admits that custom is at times the ground of illusion, and "may lead us into some false comparison of ideas."<sup>2</sup> Thus in the *Treatise*, belief in the existence of body is "an affair of too great importance" to be entrusted by nature to "our uncertain reasonings and speculations"; it is entrusted to custom and imagination. And the causal inference is determined through custom or instinct with an absolute and uncontrollable necessity; yet custom is sometimes false or illusive. The case is exactly similar in the *Inquiry*. For instance, Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> "I shall add, for a further confirmation of the foregoing theory, that, as this operation of the mind, by which we infer like effects from like causes, and *vice versa*, is so essential to the subsistence of all human creatures, it is not probable, that it could be trusted to the fallacious deductions of our reason, . . . It is more conformable to the ordinary wisdom of nature

<sup>1</sup> P. 474.<sup>2</sup> P. 415; cf. pp. 444, 547, 548.<sup>3</sup> P. 47; cf. pp. 124, 127.



to secure so necessary an act of the mind, by some instinct or mechanical tendency [that is, custom], which may be infallible in its operations." But in section xii he admits:<sup>1</sup> "We have no argument to convince us, that objects, which have, in our experience, been frequently conjoined, will likewise, in other instances, be conjoined in the same manner; and that nothing leads us to this inference but custom or a certain instinct of our nature; which it is indeed difficult to resist, but which, like other instincts, may be fallacious and deceitful. While the skeptic insists upon these topics, he shows his force, or rather, indeed, his own and our weakness; and seems, for the time at least, to destroy all assurance and conviction." True, in the Inquiry, Hume does not subject the "faculty, which judges," to the critical examination that he did in the Treatise. Nevertheless, as he once wrote Strahan,<sup>2</sup> concerning the essays on suicide and immortality: "I suppressed these Essays, not because they could give any offence, but because, I thought, they could neither give pleasure nor instruction," so he remarks now, regarding the reasoning of the skeptic: "These arguments might be displayed at greater length if any durable good or benefit to society could ever be expected to result from them."<sup>3</sup> This observation evidently implies that his position on this topic also remains unchanged.

It has often been asserted, on the one hand, that Hume denied the possibility of a necessary connection between causes and effects, and on the other, that he denied only the possibility of a knowledge of such

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 130, 131; cf. I, pp. 547, 548; IV, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> P. 131.

connection. Thus Knight<sup>1</sup> declares that Hume's theory of causation "positively affirms that there is no power within the antecedent adequate to produce the consequent, that the notion of such causal power is a fiction of the imagination." And Riehl<sup>2</sup> states that Hume never denied the existence of active principles in nature, but only their knowableness and conceivability. While each position may contain an element of truth, the latter is the more correct; it is conformable with Hume's practice, the former is the more consistent with his theory. Hume's language frequently implies the existence of external objects corresponding to impressions and ideas. Occasionally, he admits such existences. In the *Treatise*, he says:<sup>3</sup> "I am, indeed, ready to allow, that there may be several qualities both in material and immaterial objects, with which we are utterly unacquainted." And in the *Inquiry*,<sup>4</sup> he acknowledges "a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas," although the "powers and forces" by which the course of nature is governed are "wholly unknown to us." Hence, he does not mean to deny the existence of an external world endowed with various powers and forces, but only the possibility of knowing it. The rationalists and intuitionists maintain, of course, that he overshoots the mark when he asserts, as he repeatedly does, that the idea

<sup>1</sup> Hume, p. 159; cf. Brougham, *Lives of Men of Letters in the Time of George III*, p. 172. Koenig, *Die Entwicklung d. Causalproblems*, I, p. 216 and n.

<sup>2</sup> *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, p. 129; cf. Burton, *Life*, I, p. 81; von Kirchmann, *Untersuchung in Betreff d. m. Verstandes*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> P. 462; cf. p. 477; II, p. 183. Pp. 46, 71.

of necessary connection among external objects is a fiction. For to assert that this idea is fictitious and false is the same as to imply that there is not any necessary connection among objects in the external world. It should be observed, however, that the idea which Hume affirmed to be false was the rationalistic idea of causality. And in this respect, it will now be generally conceded that he was correct. Nevertheless, had he contented himself with stating that such necessary connection, provided it exists, is unknown, the position would have been quite satisfactory to the empiricists, as well as perfectly consistent with his own principles.

Finally, there are some writers<sup>1</sup> who insist that Hume's theory of causation is the same, or practically the same as that of Kant. The truth of this statement depends upon the manner in which it is interpreted. With Hume, as with Kant, the idea of cause and effect is subjective, and is not valid when applied to suprasensible things; to this extent both agree. According to Hume, however, the idea is empirically derived, by means of the imagination, from repetition, custom, or instinct, and in a similar manner is applicable to perceptions; while according to Kant, the idea is a transcendental concept of the understanding, and is *a priori* valid when applied within the realm of phenomena. With the former, therefore, the idea is equivalent to the invariable succession of antecedent and consequent; with the latter, it contains an element of necessity over and above invariable succession. True, according to Hume, the idea of cause and effect

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Riehl, *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, I, p. 139; Simon, *Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge*, pp. 203, 206; Webb, *Veil of Isis*, p. 94; Stirling, *Mind*, Vol. X, p. 71.

contains, after a manner, an element of necessity also. But the necessity spoken of in this case is that which arises from imagination and custom, from an instinct which is the great guide of human life, but which, like any other instinct, may be fallacious and deceitful. This subjective necessity of imagination and custom is fundamentally different from that *a priori* necessity of the understanding for which Kant persistently contended.

§ 30. *Conclusion.*—The main points in the chapter may now be brought together. There are two prominent elements in Hume's treatment of the idea of cause and effect; one logical or epistemological, the other psychological. The former deals with the ground of the transition or causal inference; the latter explains the genesis of the idea of necessary connection.

1. The causal inference is not a conclusion of the understanding, but an activity of the imagination. It is not a logical inference, but a psychological process. It is not a product of reason, but of custom. It arises on the observation of a number of similar instances constantly conjoined, and differs from a mere idea of imagination in having greater force, vivacity, or liveliness, that is, belief. Although the conclusion is not a valid inference logically, yet psychologically it is a necessary one. It is even spoken of as being superior to the "fallacious deductions" of reason.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, not only does there exist a conflict between the imagination and instinct, on the one hand, and the understanding, or "the general and more established prop-

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 478; IV, p. 47.



erties of the imagination,'<sup>1</sup> on the other, but each of these faculties alone subverts or contradicts itself.<sup>2</sup> The causal conclusion rests upon precisely the same basis in both works. Although the inference, or transition cannot be theoretically justified; yet practically, it is indubitable, and is sufficient for all the purposes of life.

2. The idea of necessary connection between causes and effects arises in the mind at the same time as the causal inference, and in the same manner, viz., from experience, through imagination and custom. The genesis of the idea has three stages, two of which may be called objective, and one subjective: (1) The mind observes a number of similar instances constantly conjoined; (2) as the result of this observation, a new feeling, determination, or internal impression arises, the impression of reflection of which the idea of necessary connection is a copy; (3) the idea of necessary connection, which at first is wholly subjective, is gradually applied to external objects through a quality of the imagination, and in this way arises the idea of necessary connection between objects or events. Consequently, the idea of cause and effect is valid as a copy of a subjective feeling, and is applicable to objects in the sense of invariable succession of antecedent and consequent; but as an idea of necessary connection between objects or events, it is a mere fiction. The genesis of the idea explains its nature and validity. On all these points the position of the Inquiry is the same as that of the Treatise.

In the history of speculative thought, the paradoxes

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 547.    <sup>2</sup> I, pp. 505, 511, 547; IV, pp. 125, 127, 131.

of one age often become the orthodoxy of the next, and in turn become the absurdities of the succeeding age. Such has been true of the idea of cause and effect. Invariable succession of antecedent and consequent, the striking paradox of Hume's day, became in a later time the commonly accepted view of causation, and has now in turn given place to a juster conception, that of the equivalence of cause and effect. But while thought moves in cycles, these at most are only corresponding, never identical. The empiricist's criticism of causality has been made once for all. As Luther burst the bonds of scholasticism, Hume rent for ever the veil of rationalism. The philosopher, however, was more successful at demolishing old temples, than at erecting new ones. While the foundation which he first laid still remains, the Humian structure, never stable, has already crumbled with its own weight. It is beyond the scope of this work, of course, to give a derivation of the idea of cause and effect. Suffice it to say, that this idea is a product of experience. Its origin and history are to be sought in the life of the race. True, it passes through a series of corresponding stages in the life of each normal individual. Its dawn is unfolded in the conscious activity of the child. The essential element at this stage is producing power. The element of necessary connection does not arise until much later, sometimes indeed does not appear at all. The early age at which Hume wrote the Treatise is possibly a partial explanation why he insisted so strongly upon his principle that events seemed "conjoined" but not "connected," that it is easy "to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the

next," without attaching to it the idea of "a cause or productive principle." The idea of equality between cause and effect may arise either before, or after that of necessary connection, according to the character of the person's environment. But the idea of causation, in any, and every stage of its development, is merely a generalization, conscious or unconscious, from the totality of experience.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schurman, *Phil. Rev.*, Vol. VIII, p. 457-463.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BELIEF.

§ 31. *Belief of Impressions.*—Hume recognized two systems of knowledge, the counterpart of two worlds: one the system of impressions, corresponding to the world of sense and memory; the other the system of ideas, corresponding to the world of judgment, or of reason and imagination.<sup>1</sup> His distinctive treatment of belief occurs in the discussion on the particular question of causation. Naturally, therefore, his problem is to explain belief of ideas, or more specifically, belief of the inferred idea in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Incidentally, however, he made an occasional reference, both in this and in other parts of the Treatise, to belief of impressions.

Hume's doctrine concerning belief of impressions has been much misunderstood. Brede<sup>2</sup> asserts that Hume never calls the liveliness of impressions belief, only that of ideas. And Green<sup>3</sup> calls attention to what he takes to be an "inconsistency" in Hume's use of the word belief. "At the end of sec. 5 (Part III)," he says, "the term is extended to 'impressions of the senses and memory.' . . . But in the following section the characteristic of belief is placed in the *derived* liveliness of an *idea* as distinct from the im-

<sup>1</sup>I, pp. 407, 408.

<sup>2</sup>*Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 7, 50.

<sup>3</sup>I, p. 279 n.; cf. Zimels, *David Humes Lehren vom Glauben*, pp. 10-12.



mediate liveliness of an impression." Neither of these views is quite correct. Hume's treatment of belief is certainly not clear, but on this point it is not necessarily inconsistent. To place the characteristic of belief, when dealing with "reasonings from causation," in the derived "force and vivacity"<sup>1</sup> of an idea does not preclude the author from attributing belief to impressions also. It is not surprising, therefore, that he occasionally speaks of it in this latter sense, and ascribes to it a higher worth, or greater degree of assurance, than he does to belief of reasoning concerning matters of fact. For instance, he asserts:<sup>2</sup> "The *belief* or *assent*, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present." Also,<sup>3</sup> "Impressions always actuate the soul, and that in the highest degree; . . . Though an idle fiction has no efficacy, yet we find by experience, that the ideas of those objects, which we believe either are or will be existent, produce in a lesser degree the same effect with those impressions, which are immediately present to the senses and perception." And again,<sup>4</sup> "We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but it is in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings."

In the Inquiry, Hume refers only incidentally to belief of impressions; but he implies the same view as that in the Treatise. "Sensible objects," he says,<sup>5</sup> "have always a greater influence on the fancy than

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 385, 396; IV, p. 41.    <sup>2</sup> P. 387.

<sup>3</sup> P. 417.

<sup>4</sup> P. 478; cf. pp. 388, 448, 449.

<sup>5</sup> P. 44.

any other; and this influence they readily convey to those ideas, to which they are related, and which they resemble." Also in section xii he states:<sup>1</sup> "It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural impulse or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses; . . . Even the animal creation are governed by a like opinion, and preserve this belief of external objects [impressions], in all their thoughts, designs, and actions."

§ 32. *Belief of Ideas*.—It is to the explanation of belief of ideas, or rather of the inferred idea in experiential reasoning, that Hume particularly addresses himself; for he includes belief, in this sense, in the problem of causation. In the Treatise he asks:<sup>2</sup> "Wherein consists the difference betwixt believing and disbelieving any proposition?" And he replies: "The answer is easy with regard to propositions, that are proved by intuition or demonstration. In that case, the person, who asserts, not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is necessarily determined to conceive them in that particular manner, . . . Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive any thing contrary to a demonstration." In the Inquiry, he does not deal with intuitive or demonstrative propositions,—probably because the answer was easy, and for the sake of brevity,—but only with belief concerning probable reasoning. To explain this belief is a special aim in both works.

I. The Exposition of the Treatise. In the earlier work Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> "The idea of an object is an essential part of the belief of it, but not the whole."

<sup>1</sup> P. 124.

<sup>2</sup> P. 395.

<sup>3</sup> P. 394.

Wherein then, it may be asked, does belief consist? An idea can be altered in any one of three ways: (1) A new element may be added to it; (2) the composition of its parts may be varied; or (3) the manner of conception may be changed. Now belief of an idea, according to Hume, does not consist in any element, or part of a perception added to it, nor in the order or composition of its parts. Consequently, it consists only in "the *manner*" in which the idea is conceived.<sup>1</sup> "An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defined, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION."<sup>2</sup> Briefly stated then, Hume's position is this: In reasoning concerning matters of fact, an idea believed differs from an idea imagined merely in being more forcible, vivid, steady, lively, etc. And belief may be regarded equally, either as the force and vivacity of an idea, or as an idea in its force and vivacity; since it is, strictly speaking, neither the effect nor the cause of the force and vivacity, but the force and vivacity itself.<sup>3</sup>

II. The Exposition of the Appendix. In order to make his former reasoning more convincing and to guard against misconception, Hume discussed the subject of belief somewhat further in the appendix. Here he made a few statements, however, which seem not only inconsistent in themselves, but also incompatible with his former position. An apparent contradiction may first be disposed of. He affirms, as usual, that belief consists in some sentiment or feeling, which is not "distinguishable from the concep-

<sup>1</sup> P. 395.<sup>2</sup> P. 396.<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 396, 397 n., 399, 402, 405, 410.

tion."<sup>1</sup> Yet he admits that, in a certain case of belief, viz., when the mind passes "from doubt and agitation to tranquility and repose," there is "a feeling distinct and separate from the conception."<sup>2</sup> The latter statement is not, in reality, inconsistent with the former; since feeling, in this particular instance, is an attendant on belief, though not an essential part of it, and is distinct and separate from belief as well as from the conception.

A further remark raises a greater difficulty. In the Treatise, when explaining his view of belief, Hume said:<sup>3</sup> "When you would any way vary the idea of a particular object, you can only increase or diminish its force and vivacity." In the appendix, he acknowledges that this statement is incorrect, and declares:<sup>4</sup> "I believe there are other differences among ideas, which cannot properly be comprehended under these terms. Had I said, that two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different *feeling*, I should have been nearer the truth." No doubt had he said so, he would have been nearer the truth. For whatever *feeling* may mean, the author implies that it is something other than degree of force and vivacity. Hume, however, does not explain the meaning of feeling. On the contrary, he confesses that "it is impossible to explain perfectly this feeling or manner of conception."<sup>5</sup> He still contends that belief differs from fiction only in "the *manner* of its being conceived." But he adds:<sup>6</sup> "When I would explain this *manner*, I scarce find any word that fully answers the case, but am obliged to have recourse to

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 556.<sup>2</sup> I, p. 557.<sup>3</sup> P. 396; cf. p. 397.<sup>4</sup> P. 560.<sup>5</sup> P. 398.<sup>6</sup> P. 397.



every one's feeling, in order to give him a perfect notion of this operation of the mind. An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, . . . And this different feeling I endeavor to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*." Finally, he sums up the matter as follows:<sup>1</sup> "Thus upon a general view of the subject, there appear to be two questions of importance, which we may venture to recommend to the consideration of philosophers, *Whether there be any thing to distinguish belief from the simple conception beside the feeling or sentiment?* And, *Whether this feeling be any thing but a firmer conception, or a faster hold, that we take of the object?*" Both these questions, as indeed their forms imply, are answered in the negative.

Now the question arises, what is Hume's doctrine of belief in the appendix? At first sight, it seems to be different from that in the Treatise; but to what extent it may be different is by no means evident. The treatment in the earlier work possessed two prominent characteristics: (1) Hume repeatedly professed to be able to explain fully the whole matter; (2) his explanation was generally to the effect that, belief consists in the degree of "force and vivacity" of an idea, arising from its relation to a present impression. Now he states: (1) Belief is nothing but a peculiar feeling, or manner of conception; (2) he is unable to explain perfectly the nature of this feeling. It might be thought, therefore, that his view of belief is entirely changed. Such, however, is not the case. In the Treatise, Hume maintained that the only differ-

<sup>1</sup> P. 557.

ence between impressions and ideas, or between two ideas of the same impression, is a difference of degree, and, in general, he thought that this difference of degree could be adequately expressed by the phrase "force and vivacity."<sup>1</sup> He still holds to the former statement, but he has abandoned the latter. A deeper psychological insight has enabled him to perceive that there are differences of degree between impressions and ideas, or between two ideas of the same impression, other than those that can be expressed by the words force and vivacity. There is a difference of firmness, steadiness, faster hold, etc., which is not properly included under the former term. All these differences may be covered by the word *feeling*; but feeling does not indicate that wherein the differences consist. Consequently, with the attainment of this juster view, Hume changes somewhat the account of his doctrine. He explains that the differentia of belief is not degree of force and vivacity. The context shows, however, that by this statement he only means, that degree of force and vivacity is not always the differentia of belief; he implies that sometimes it is.<sup>2</sup> He now perceives clearly, what he does not seem to have fully realized, when writing the Treatise, that belief, psychologically, is not always the same thing. Feeling is an expansive term. Hence, in the appendix, he asserts that the differentia of belief is feeling. He acknowledges that he cannot define this feeling. And when he endeavors to describe it he calls it "a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*,"<sup>3</sup> a "*firmer conception*, or a

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 314, 327, 375, 396, 397, 403, 417.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 398, 556, 557.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 398.

*faster hold, that we take of the object.*"<sup>1</sup> Farther he did not carry his analysis of the problem.

It is now obvious that the position of the appendix differs but little from that of the Treatise. It differs even less, however, than has thus far been represented. Two remarks will make this clear. (1) It is not at all improbable that interpreters have attached too much importance to the use of the term *feeling* in the appendix. In many instances, as for example, when it is said that "an idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea," Hume may mean simply that the idea is perceived differently, or is felt to be different. (2) Although in the earlier work, the author generally seemed to be fully convinced that belief could be adequately explained as a difference in degree of force and vivacity, yet at times he was not so positive. In the section, "Of the Causes of Belief," he acknowledged that there was "a little ambiguity" in the words "*strong and lively*";<sup>2</sup> and repeatedly he used a variety of terms corresponding with those which he employed later in the appendix. Thus he described belief as "a strong and steady conception of any idea";<sup>3</sup> as "*firmness or solidity*" of ideas;<sup>4</sup> as "*a more vivid and intense conception*" of an idea;<sup>5</sup> and as "some sensation or peculiar manner of conception."<sup>6</sup> He even designated it as feeling. "It is not solely in poetry and music," he declared,<sup>7</sup> "we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinced of any principle, it is only an idea, which strikes more

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 557.

<sup>2</sup> P. 405.

<sup>3</sup> P. 397 n.

<sup>4</sup> P. 406.

<sup>5</sup> P. 418.

<sup>6</sup> P. 475.

<sup>7</sup> P. 403.

strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence." It seems, therefore, that the doctrine of belief, in the appendix, is substantially the same as that in the Treatise. An examination of the account in the Inquiry tends to confirm this conclusion.

III. The Exposition of the Inquiry. The doctrine of belief in the Inquiry is exactly the same as that in the appendix. After asserting, as the conclusion of the whole matter, concerning experiential reasoning, that "all belief of matter of fact or real existence is derived merely from some object, present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object"; Hume acknowledges that his further researches into "the nature of this *belief*, and of the *customary conjunction*," may, by the reader, who is not interested in abstract speculations, be neglected, without detriment to the understanding of "the following inquiries."<sup>1</sup> Because of this statement,—and some others to be examined presently,—Brede<sup>2</sup> affirms that, in the Inquiry, not only is there assigned to belief a subordinate significance, but the concept of it is positively changed. In these two respects, Zimels<sup>3</sup> agrees with Brede, and maintains further that all the essential modifications of the doctrine of the Inquiry appear in the treatment in the appendix. Several other writers hold the same opinion, on this question, as Brede or Zimels.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 31, 50.

<sup>3</sup> *David Humes Lehre vom Glauben*, pp. 5, 6, 71.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Stephen, *Hist. of English Thought*, I, p. 44 n.



Zimels is the best, as well as the most recent exponent of this view. His whole Dissertation is an argument to show, that Hume, in his exposition in the Treatise, met with difficulties and even contradictions which obliged him to change gradually, although unconsciously, his form of statement; that on reviewing the subject, in order to evade these difficulties and remove the contradictions, he modified his doctrine, in the appendix, to such an extent, that it not only conflicts with that of the Treatise, but contradicts one of the fundamental principles of his system; naturally, therefore, since his whole treatment was unsatisfactory, and he felt himself unable to master the problem, he cut short the exposition, in the Inquiry, and, passing over the chief difficulties, endeavored to make his view of belief consistent, both in itself, and with the general principles of his philosophy. Zimels' argument is plausible as well as ingenious. It is more than plausible. It contains an element of validity; but is not quite conclusive.

The treatment of belief, in the Inquiry, is exceedingly brief, and also comparatively unimportant. It is brief, not because of difficulties realized by the author, but for quite other reasons: (1) Hume omitted a specific account of belief of impressions, and of ideas in intuitive and demonstrative reasoning, although he maintained that with regard to them there was no difficulty whatever; (2) he aimed at brevity and simplicity on general principles; they were part of his avowed method; and (3) he was writing for a different class of readers. The treatment is, comparatively speaking, unimportant because: (1) As Hume's special problem was to explain belief of the inferred

idea in reasoning on causation, incidental treatment of the subject, in connection with the causal conclusion, was sufficient for his purpose; and (2) having dealt with this question in the appendix, as well as in the Treatise, he had then nothing further to add, and also nothing to take away.

It is said, however, that there are contradictions in the former account, and that these demand explanation. Here are some of those commonly pointed out. (1) In the Treatise, Hume asserted:<sup>1</sup> "The vivacity produced by the fancy is in many cases greater than that which arises from custom and experience. We are hurried away by the lively imagination of our author or companion; and even he himself is often a victim to his own fire and genius." This statement does not imply a contradiction in the philosophy of human nature; it simply expresses a fact observable in every-day life. An untruth, if well told, is often believed; even the narrator may in time deceive himself, as do habitual story-tellers, "who by the frequent repetition of their lies, come at last to believe and remember them, as realities."<sup>2</sup> (2) Again, when speaking of the effect of general rules, Hume affirmed in the appendix:<sup>3</sup> "A like reflection on *general rules* keeps us from augmenting our belief upon every increase of the force and vivacity of our ideas. Where an opinion admits of no doubt, or opposite probability, we attribute to it a full conviction; though the want of resemblance, or contiguity, may render its force inferior to that of other opinions." The difficulty which, at first sight, appears here vanishes on the slightest reflection. Hume was not a

<sup>1</sup> P. 420.<sup>2</sup> I, p. 387.<sup>3</sup> I, p. 422.

modern, or experimental psychologist. He adopted the static view of mind, and also the atomistic. Yet he knew nothing of structural psychology, as distinct from functional. His analysis was always good, as far as it went; but often it did not go very far. Such was the case in the present instance. Hume was dealing with an exceedingly complex group of mental processes. When dealing with groups of this character, he divided each into two main parts, the present impression, and the related idea. He did not observe, however, that these two constituents are still complex; and failing in this respect, he also failed to note the existence of many of their less prominent elements. Besides these two chief constituents, he recognized certain relations subsisting between them, viz., causation, resemblance, and contiguity. But this impression, the idea, and the relations, as Hume regarded them, do not constitute the whole of a conscious content. They do not include all of that "fringe of relations" in which a conscious content commonly has its setting. They are part of the totality of experience, as their objects are part of the real world. As such they are related by the same, or by other relations to other impressions and ideas. On account of these latter impressions, ideas, or relations, which Hume did not recognize, the idea which he did recognize may be attended by a feeling of solidity, firmness, steadiness, faster hold, or force and vivacity, corresponding with the specific character of the mental content. Hume, in the *Treatise*, appendix, and *Inquiry*, recognized the more prominent of these emotional elements, and designated them according to their several characteristics. All

were included, finally, under the term feeling, the nature of which varied for each particular experience. General rules are based on causation, resemblance, and contiguity, and arise through repetition or custom and generalization. They may produce belief as a feeling of firmness, steadiness, or faster hold, when the idea has comparatively little force and vivacity; or *vice versa*, they may inhibit belief, as when a very vivid idea, or even a hallucination, is held to be unreal by the person who experiences it.

Further, it is said that the doctrine of the Inquiry is inconsistent with that of the Treatise. The only grounds for this assertion are Hume's admission, in the appendix,<sup>1</sup> that "there are other differences among ideas, which cannot properly be comprehended" under the expression "force and vivacity," and his adoption, in the later writings, of the term *feeling* to express the exact nature of belief. But it has already been pointed out<sup>2</sup> that the author recognized, in the earlier work, an ambiguity in the phrase "force and vivacity," and that he used feeling, as well as all the other distinctive terms in the appendix, to explain belief. It may now be shown that all the expressions employed for this purpose in the later work were also used in the earlier. In the Inquiry, Hume states:<sup>3</sup> "The difference between *fiction* and *belief* lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former, and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure. . . . In this consists the whole nature of belief." In the Treatise,<sup>4</sup> he said, that "all probable

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 560.

<sup>2</sup> P. 179.

<sup>3</sup> P. 41.

<sup>4</sup> P. 403.



reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation''; that in philosophy, as well as in poetry and music, ''we must follow our taste and sentiment''; and that ''the preference,'' or belief, of ''one set of arguments above another'' is only decided by one's ''feeling.'' True, in the Inquiry, he admits:<sup>1</sup> ''were we to attempt a *definition* of this sentiment, we should, perhaps, find it a very difficult, if not an impossible task.'' And since he cannot easily give a definition, he offers ''a *description*'' of it:<sup>2</sup> ''I say then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain.'' Although afterwards he adds:<sup>3</sup> ''I confess, that it is impossible perfectly to explain this feeling or manner of conception,'' he concludes:<sup>4</sup> ''Let us, then, take in the whole compass of this doctrine, and allow, that the sentiment of belief is nothing but a conception more intense and steady than what attends the mere fictions of the imagination, and that this *manner* of conception arises from a customary conjunction of the object with something present to the memory or senses.'' This is the doctrine of the Treatise, and all the terms used in the later work were used in the earlier.<sup>5</sup> It is evident, therefore, that just as Hume saw, when writing the Inquiry, that degree of force and vivacity does not express the exact nature of belief; so he somehow felt, when composing the Treatise, that it was not an adequate expression for belief in every case.

Every one recognizes, of course, that there is a difference of treatment in the later work. Here the

<sup>1</sup> P. 41.<sup>2</sup> P. 42.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>4</sup> P. 43; cf. p. 48.<sup>5</sup> Pp. 396 n. 2, — 418.

account of belief is more cautiously, more carefully, and even more correctly stated than formerly. This difference in exposition arose from the author's fuller psychological insight. So far, however, as the later account is more correct than the earlier, one may infer that it involves a change in the doctrine. This much is admitted; but the change is only in the way of development. It is a variation of detail, not a modification of principle. Consequently, it does not involve any inconsistency between the position of the Inquiry and that of the Treatise, on this question.

Finally, it will be objected that, since, in the later work, there is a change in the treatment of belief, wherein it is recognized that belief does not always consist in degree of "force and vivacity," this new position seems to be inconsistent with one of the general principles of Hume's system, viz., that there is only a difference of degree between impressions and ideas.<sup>1</sup> In support of this view is adduced another form of the argument just examined. In the appendix,<sup>2</sup> Hume admits that "more mature reflection has discovered" to him an "error" in his reasoning, in the Treatise, where he said that "two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different degrees of force and vivacity"; he concedes that "there are other differences among ideas, which cannot properly be comprehended under these terms"; and he adopts, thereafter, the term *feeling* to express those differences exactly. This admission is worthy of consideration; but without examination, too much significance ought not to be attached to it. Hume

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zimels, *David Humes Lehre vom Glauben*, pp. 78, 79.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 560.

used the foregoing words with reference to belief. Subsequently, when he wished to be exact, he employed feeling to denote the differentia of belief; on all other occasions, however, he employed the same terms as in the Treatise. He did not imply, thereby, nor mean to express any contradiction in his doctrine of belief. In like manner, the correction, in the appendix, of the phrase "force and vivacity" is not meant to be inconsistent with the general principle, in the Treatise, above mentioned. Hume still recognizes only a difference of degree between an idea and its corresponding impression, or between two ideas of the same impression. When speaking precisely, that difference of degree must be designated by the term feeling, which includes force and vivacity, solidity, firmness, steadiness, or faster hold, etc., according to the constituent elements of the idea. But as a general rule, or speaking roughly, the difference of degree may conveniently be indicated by the words force and vivacity. This undoubtedly is Hume's position, on the question under consideration, when the verbal inconsistencies in his writings are removed.

Exception may possibly be taken to our mode of interpretation, in attributing a twofold meaning to the expression "force and vivacity." In that case, we can only reply that we are explaining the doctrine of Hume. We have merely made explicit, what he left implicit. For instance, in the appendix, he corrected the statement, made in the Treatise,<sup>1</sup> that "the idea of a particular object" can be varied only by increasing or diminishing its "force and vivacity," and said that there are other differences among ideas,

<sup>1</sup> P. 369.

"which cannot properly be comprehended under these terms." Yet later, in the *Inquiry*, he asserted:<sup>1</sup> "Here therefore we may divide all the perceptions of the mind into two classes or species, which are distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity." That is, in the former case he is speaking precisely, in the latter, generally. Moreover, while in the appendix he freely acknowledges his error in the earlier work, he does not admit that it involves any contradiction in his system. On the contrary, he implies, in the appendix and in the *Inquiry*, that his doctrine of belief is consistent, both with that in the *Treatise*, and with the fundamental principles of his philosophy.<sup>2</sup> The remarks on this subject, in the appendix, were made, therefore, not in order to modify his former view, but as he said himself, to make his reasoning "more convincing,"<sup>3</sup> and "to guard against all mistakes in the readers."<sup>4</sup>

In the light of what has been said, the similarity of Hume's doctrine of belief, in his several writings, may be seen at a glance from the following passages: In the *Treatise* he declares:<sup>5</sup> "When . . . I compare an impression with an idea, and find that their only difference consists in their different degrees of force and vivacity, I conclude upon the whole, that belief is a more vivid and intense conception of an idea, proceeding from its relation to a present impression." And further:<sup>6</sup> "It is certain, that the belief super-adds nothing to the idea [in reasoning concerning matters of fact], but only changes our

<sup>1</sup> P. 13; cf. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. I, pp. 555, 557; IV, pp. 43, 47, 49, 85.

<sup>4</sup> I, p. 555.

<sup>5</sup> P. 403.

<sup>3</sup> I, p. 557.

<sup>6</sup> P. 402.



manner of conceiving it, and renders it more strong and lively. . . . There enters nothing into this operation of the mind but a present impression, a lively idea, and a relation or association in the fancy betwixt the impression and idea; so that there can be no suspicion of mistake." In the appendix he says:<sup>1</sup> "I conclude, by an induction which seems to me very evident that an opinion or belief is nothing but an idea, that is different from a fiction, not in the nature, or the order of its parts, but in the *manner* of its being conceived. But when I would explain this *manner*, I scarce find any word that fully answers the case, . . . An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, . . . and this different feeling I endeavor to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*." And in the Inquiry he states:<sup>2</sup> "The difference between *fiction* and *belief* lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former, and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure. . . . Were we to attempt a *definition* of this sentiment, we should, perhaps, find it a very difficult, if not an impossible task." Finally,<sup>3</sup> "Let us . . . take in the whole compass of this doctrine, and allow, that the sentiment of belief is nothing but a conception more intense and steady than what attends the mere fictions of the imagination, and that this *manner* of conception arises from a customary conjunction of the object with something present to the memory or senses."

The opinion of some critics<sup>4</sup> that Hume's doctrine

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup> P. 41.

<sup>3</sup> P. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 50.

of belief, as expressed in the Inquiry, is the natural transition to the view of the philosophers of the Scottish School is manifestly a product of the imagination, rather than of the understanding. There always remained a fundamental difference between the view of Hume, and that of Reid. According to the former, the feeling or sentiment of belief, although instinctive, is derivative, arising through association and custom; according to the latter, belief is always immediate and ultimate. With Hume, belief is a product of the sensitive, rather than of the cogitative part of our nature; with Reid, it has its origin in *a priori* intellectual principles.

§ 33. *The Cause of Belief.*—Since belief, as stated in the Treatise,<sup>1</sup> consists in the force and vivacity of a perception, impressions of sense and ideas of memory are believed because they have this force and vivacity in themselves. The cause of belief of reasoning concerning matters of fact, or ideas of imagination is the force and vivacity of an impression of sense or memory, and the customary transition from this impression to a related idea. Thus Hume asserts:<sup>2</sup> “I would willingly establish it as a general maxim in the science of human nature, *that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity.*” Then by means of a set of experiments, he professes to show that a present impression and the causal relation are requisite to produce belief.<sup>3</sup> The relations of resemblance and contiguity, although inadequate by themselves, strengthen

<sup>1</sup> P. 387, 417, 448.

<sup>2</sup> P. 399.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 402, 403.

the relation of cause and effect. Hence, "the picture of an absent friend" enlivens the idea of him, because of resemblance.<sup>1</sup> "The ceremonies of the *Roman Catholic* religion" inspire the devotion and quicken the fervor of "the devotees of that strange superstition."<sup>2</sup> When one is "a few miles from home," whatever relates to it touches one more nearly, because of contiguity, than when one is "two hundred leagues distant."<sup>3</sup> "A man, whose memory presents him with a lively image of the *Red Sea, and the Desert, and Jerusalem, and Galilee*, can never doubt of any miraculous events, which are related either by *Moses or the Evangelists*."<sup>4</sup> In like manner, want of resemblance and contiguity has an opposite effect upon belief. This is why men show a "universal carelessness and stupidity" with regard to a future state, yet "are everywhere concerned about what may happen after their death," provided it has reference to the present world.<sup>5</sup>

In the Inquiry<sup>6</sup> Hume states that "sensible objects have always a greater influence on the fancy than any other," and seems to hold the same view as formerly regarding the cause of belief of impressions.<sup>7</sup> The cause of belief in reasoning concerning matters of fact he explains in the following manner:<sup>8</sup> "Does it happen, . . . that, when one of the objects is presented to the senses or memory, the mind is not only carried to the conception of the correlative, but reaches a steadier and stronger conception of it than what otherwise it would have been able to attain?"

<sup>1</sup> P. 400.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>3</sup> P. 401.<sup>4</sup> P. 410.<sup>5</sup> Pp. 412, 413.<sup>6</sup> P. 44.<sup>7</sup> Cf. pp. 45, 124.<sup>8</sup> P. 43.

This seems to be the case with that belief, which arises from the relation of cause and effect. And if the case be the same with the other relations or principles of association, this may be established as a general law, which takes place in all the operations of the mind." A number of illustrations, all but one of which are taken from the Treatise, are thus given in verification of the general law.<sup>1</sup> The position of both works, on the question of the cause of belief, is the same.

§ 34. *Conclusion.*—The results of the discussion may be summarized as follows:—

1. Belief of Impressions. In the Treatise, the highest degree of belief is attributed to impressions of sense and ideas of memory. In the Inquiry, the same view is implied, although not explicitly stated.

2. Belief of Ideas. The special subject for examination, in both works, is belief of the inferred idea in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Hume describes the manner of conception which constitutes belief, in the Treatise, as a superior degree of force, vivacity,<sup>2</sup> strength; vividness,<sup>3</sup> liveliness,<sup>4</sup> firmness, solidity,<sup>5</sup> intensity,<sup>6</sup> intenseness,<sup>7</sup> steadiness,<sup>8</sup> or as feeling;<sup>9</sup> in the appendix, as a *feeling*,<sup>10</sup> that is, a superior force, vivacity, solidity, firmness, steadiness,<sup>11</sup> strength, or faster hold;<sup>12</sup> and in the Inquiry, as a *feeling*,<sup>13</sup> that is, a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady,<sup>14</sup> or intense conception,<sup>15</sup> "than what attends the mere fictions of the imagination."

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 43-45.

<sup>2</sup> P. 397.

<sup>3</sup> P. 398.

<sup>4</sup> P. 399.

<sup>5</sup> P. 406.

<sup>6</sup> P. 418.

<sup>7</sup> P. 449.

<sup>8</sup> P. 396-n. 2.

<sup>9</sup> P. 403.

<sup>10</sup> I, p. 555.

<sup>11</sup> P. 398.

<sup>12</sup> P. 557.

<sup>13</sup> P. 42.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> P. 43.



3. The Cause of Belief. The cause of belief, the author regards, in both the *Treatise*<sup>1</sup> and *Inquiry*,<sup>2</sup> as the same. Impressions of sense and ideas of memory produce belief through their own inherent force and vivacity. Ideas of imagination are believed when they are related to impressions of sense or ideas of memory by means of the causal relation. In a wider sense, belief is spoken of in the earlier work as a product of nature, and in the later, as a natural instinct;—custom being the cause, or the equivalent of the “product of nature,” and also of the “natural instinct.”

While the positions of the *Treatise*, appendix, and *Inquiry*, on the subject of belief, are substantially the same, the differences of treatment are not without significance. When Hume, in the appendix, corrected the statement in the earlier work, that “the idea of a particular object” can be varied only by increasing or diminishing its “force and vivacity,” he made a step forward in psychological analysis. This is the only significance of the correction. When, in the appendix and *Inquiry*, he substituted feeling for force and vivacity to express the differentia of belief, he recognized more fully than formerly the emotional element in belief. This is the chief significance of the change. And when, in the later writings, he employed purposely a number of terms to express this feeling, he acknowledged explicitly what he indicated only implicitly, in the earlier work, viz., that there are several forms, or kinds of belief. This is the chief significance of that “variety of terms,” which he thought would seem “unphilosophical,” but which

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 471, 474.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 40, 46, 124.

he made use of in order that his readers might "agree about the thing."<sup>1</sup> In his discussion of belief, Hume made two things clear: (1) He was fully conscious that he was on the right track; he felt that if the matter were not quite thus, it was somehow thus; (2) he was dissatisfied with his own solution. This problem is one of the very few subjects in the philosophy of human nature that underwent any development after it had been stated in the earlier work. But lacking experimental introspection, Hume was obliged to leave the problem of belief for his successors to unravel.

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 42.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PROBABILITY, NECESSITY, AND THE REASON OF ANIMALS.

§ 35. *Probability*.—In the Treatise Hume introduces, between the discussions on belief and necessary connection, three sections on probability, “in order to bestow” on his system “its full force and evidence.”<sup>1</sup> In an earlier part of the work, in accordance with the usual method of philosophers, he divided “human reason”—the objects of knowledge or reasoning—into knowledge, and probability.<sup>2</sup> Now, in order to mark “the several degrees of evidence,” as commonly understood, he thinks it more convenient “to distinguish human reason into three kinds, viz., *that from knowledge, from proofs, and from probabilities.*” By knowledge, he means that “assurance arising from the comparison of ideas;” by proofs, “those arguments, which are derived from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty”; and by probability, “that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the present subject of discussion is probability in this last or narrower sense. Probability, as thus defined, Hume divides into philosophical probability, and unphilosophical probability; and philosophical probability into that of chances, and that of causes. Consequently, the topics for consideration are philosophical probability of chance,

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 423, 449, 450.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 372, 423.

<sup>3</sup> P. 423.

philosophical probability of cause, and unphilosophical probability. They may be treated in their order.

# I. The Account of Probability in the Treatise.

1. Probability of Chance. In reasonings concerning philosophical probability of chances, according to Hume, there are two points for explanation: (1) The nature of chance; (2) the effect upon the mind of a superior number of chances as influencing belief. Chance has three characteristics:<sup>1</sup> (1) It is merely "the negation of a cause, and produces a total indifference in the mind"; (2) "one negation of a cause and one total indifference can never be superior or inferior to another," that is, all chances are equal; (3) among chances that are to be the foundation of reasoning, "there must always be a mixture of causes." On observing a superior number of chances, belief arises "neither by *demonstration* nor *probability*,"<sup>2</sup> but from imagination.<sup>3</sup> And the act of imagination, in conclusions concerning the probability of chances, includes three elements:<sup>4</sup> (1) A summing up, or fusion, of the favorable instances; (2) a summing up of the unfavorable instances; (3) the subtraction of the latter sum, or sums from the former. The remainder represents the probability, and the degree of assurance or strength of belief.

2. Probability of Cause. Since it is "commonly allowed by philosophers, that what the vulgar call chance is nothing but a secret and concealed cause," Hume remarks:<sup>5</sup> "What I have said concerning the probability of chances can serve to no other purpose, than to assist us in explaining the probability of

<sup>1</sup> P. 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 427, 428.

<sup>4</sup> P. 428; cf. 436.

<sup>5</sup> P. 428.



causes.” He notes that there are several kinds of probability of causes, and treats of the following three:<sup>1</sup> (1) Imperfect habit, that in which the number of instances necessary to produce a fixed or perfect habit have not been experienced; (2) contrary causes, that in which the observed instances are contrary to one another; (3) analogy,<sup>2</sup> that in which the resemblance between the observed instances is inexact or incomplete. All reasoning concerning probability of causes is derived from the same origin, viz., “*the association of ideas to a present impression.*”<sup>3</sup> In other words, all reasoning concerning the probability of causes, like that concerning the probability of chances, is based upon imagination and custom.

3. Unphilosophical Probability. Probabilities of chance and of cause “are received by philosophers, and allowed to be reasonable foundations of belief and opinion.” There are other sorts, however, that have not had “the good fortune to obtain the same sanction.” These are classified under the term unphilosophical probability.<sup>4</sup> In unphilosophical probability the evidence, and consequently the degree of belief, “diminishes by the diminution of the force and intenseness of the idea,” as in the following instances:<sup>5</sup> “[When] the present impression is faint and obscure; or the experience in some measure obliterated from the memory; or the inference derived from general rules, and yet not conformable to them.” All these sorts of unphilosophical probability “are derived from the same principles” as philosophical

<sup>1</sup> P. 429.<sup>2</sup> P. 439.<sup>3</sup> P. 428.<sup>4</sup> P. 439.<sup>5</sup> P. 449.

probability,<sup>1</sup> and consequently do not call for further explanation.

II. The Account of Probability in the Inquiry. Hume, in the Inquiry, does not make any distinction between philosophical, and unphilosophical probability, and omits entirely a treatment of the latter. This does not seem to be of any special significance, however, since he said, in the Treatise, that unphilosophical probability is "derived from the same principles" as philosophical probability. In a foot-note<sup>2</sup> he refers to Locke's division of arguments into demonstrative and probable, and states that, in accordance with the language in common use, "we ought to divide arguments into *demonstrations*, *proofs*, and *probabilities*." Then he gives a brief account of probability of chance, and probability of cause. He asserts, as in the Treatise, that "though there be no such thing as *chance* in the world; our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding, and begets a like species of belief or opinion"; that is, all chances are equal, and as such have an equal influence on the mind.<sup>3</sup> Probability of chance he explains as follows:<sup>4</sup> "There is certainly a probability, which arises from a superiority of chances on one side; and according as this superiority increases, and surpasses the opposite chances, the probability receives a proportionable increase, and begets still a higher degree of belief or assent to that side, in which we discover the superiority." And he concludes, with a more than usual degree of diffidence, that the philosophy of human nature "may, perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> P. 439.

<sup>2</sup> P. 47.

<sup>3</sup> P. 48.

<sup>4</sup> P. 47.

in some measure," be able to account for "this operation" of the mind.<sup>1</sup> Hume then declares that reasoning concerning the probability of causes is the same as that concerning the probability of chance;<sup>2</sup> and that all the received systems of philosophy are defective, since none of them can explain the nature of this mental operation.<sup>3</sup>

III. Conclusion. It is evident that Hume's doctrine of probability is the same in both works. The briefer statement, in the Inquiry, may be attributed to several causes: (1) The different circumstances under which the books were written; (2) unphilosophical probability is derived from "the same principles" as philosophical probability, and consequently did not call for specific treatment a second time; (3) the account of probability given in section vi is supplemented by several incidental references in sections viii,<sup>4</sup> ix,<sup>5</sup> and x.<sup>6</sup>

Brede thinks that there is an important difference between the doctrine of probability as presented in the later work, and that in the earlier. He states<sup>7</sup> that, according to the exposition in the Inquiry, the experiences relating to the different sides do not fuse in a single picture, as they may be said to do in the Treatise, but form pictures in the mind of both possibilities, and that picture with the more belief attached to it gives the decision directly, or immediately turns the scale. It may be admitted that there is some ground for this view, if one examines only the account

<sup>1</sup> P. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> P. 49.

<sup>4</sup> P. 71; cf. I, p. 430.

<sup>5</sup> P. 85; cf. I., p. 439.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 90, 91, 94, 105; cf. I, p. 428.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 40.

given in section vi. But when notice is taken also of the references in section x, it is perceived that the position of both works is identical. In the *Treatise*,<sup>1</sup> a conclusion from philosophical probability is the result of three processes: (1) A fusion, or union of the instances favorable to one side; (2) a fusion of the contrary instances; (3) the fusion of these two sums, or more correctly, the subtraction of the smaller sum from the greater. The remainder represents the degree of probability of the conclusion or judgment. In the *Inquiry*,<sup>2</sup> the concurrence of several views in one particular event "begets immediately, by an inextricable contrivance of nature, the sentiment of belief, and gives that event the advantage over its antagonist, which is supported by a smaller number of views, and recurs less frequently to the mind." That is to say, in the treatment of probability, both of chance and of cause, given in the *Inquiry*, the third process is not explicitly designated. It may be noted, however, that neither is the third process mentioned in the first example of probability of causes which is given in the *Treatise*.<sup>3</sup> The three processes are described fully in the account of probability of chances; the first two are described in the first example of probability of causes; and then Hume remarks:<sup>4</sup> "This operation of the mind has been so fully explained in treating of the probability of chance, that I need not here endeavor to render it more intelligible." Hence, the third process is implied, although not distinctly stated. It is stated afterwards.<sup>5</sup> In the *Inquiry* also, in the discussion on probability, it is implied, and in the dis-

<sup>1</sup> P. 428.<sup>2</sup> P. 48.<sup>3</sup> P. 432.<sup>4</sup> P. 432.<sup>5</sup> P. 436.



cussion on miracles it is expressly mentioned. The author asserts:<sup>1</sup> "All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. . . . In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence."

Brede<sup>2</sup> also alleges that the defective treatment of probability, in the Inquiry, is a result of Hume's altered view of the concept of belief. We have already shown that the doctrine of belief in the Inquiry and appendix is essentially the same as that in the Treatise.<sup>3</sup> It is only the mode of expressing the doctrine which is changed. And it is only necessary now to remark that, in the discussion on probability in the Inquiry, Hume again regards belief as "nothing but a firmer and stronger conception of an object than what attends the mere fictions of the imagination."<sup>4</sup> Having dealt so fully, in the Treatise, with the subject of probability, the author did not think it necessary to repeat, in the briefer work, all he had said in the earlier.

§ 36. *Liberty and Necessity*.—After the discussion of the relation of cause and effect, the order of treatment differs considerably in the two works. The section in the Treatise on "Rules by which to judge of Causes and Effects" is omitted in the Inquiry, and in its stead is inserted a section on "Liberty and Nec-

<sup>1</sup> P. 90; cf. pp. 93, 94, 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 176-182, above.

<sup>4</sup> P. 48; cf. p. 43.

sity," which was transferred from Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Selby-Bigge<sup>1</sup> asserts that "the question of the employment of general rules," a subject of "great speculative as well as practical interest," is ignored in the Inquiry. He thinks that the omission of the section dealing with this topic is a part of Hume's policy (1) to evade a difficult general question which he has already shown his anxiety to avoid in his omission of section iii, and (2) to escape the perplexities arising from his theory of causation regarded as a natural, as well as a philosophical relation. The reader has already noted that the subject of "general rules" was not entirely ignored in the appendix,<sup>2</sup> and that Hume, in the Inquiry, still recognized the distinction between cause as a philosophical, and cause as a natural relation.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the substituted section, the twofold definition of necessity which makes "an essential part" of cause, again marks the distinction between these two forms of relation.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it may be observed that in the second edition of the Inquiry—1751—a foot-note was added to the section on "The Reason of Animals," in order to explain "the great difference in human understandings," when reasoning concerning "facts or causes." This note contains a series of propositions somewhat analogous to the list of general rules given in the Treatise. That these Propositions do not perfectly correspond with the "general rules," and that Hume does not again enumerate the latter is by no means singular, since at the close of his account of this subject in the earlier work he remarked:<sup>5</sup> "Here is all the Logic I think

<sup>1</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, Introd.

<sup>2</sup> P. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 158-159, above.

<sup>4</sup> P. 79.

<sup>5</sup> P. 468.

proper to employ in my reasoning; and perhaps even this was not very necessary, but might have been supplied by the natural principles of our understanding." The section on "General Rules" is little more than a sequel to that on "Unphilosophical Probability."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, when the section on unphilosophical probability was omitted in the briefer work, the omission of that on general rules followed naturally. An additional reason why Hume does not again enumerate the general rules is suggested by himself, when he says in the *Treatise*:<sup>2</sup> "All the rules of this nature are very easy in their invention, but extremely difficult in their application." In the *Inquiry*, it was not at all the author's aim to deal with questions of this character.

In the *Treatise of the Passions* Hume begins his exposition of the will with a discussion on liberty and necessity. He defines will, states that "the operations of external bodies are necessary," and then attempts to prove that the actions of mind are "on the same footing" as those of matter.<sup>3</sup> He finds "two particulars," or elements, essential to necessity, viz., "the constant *union*, and the *inference* of the mind"; and holds that, "wherever we discover these two factors we must acknowledge a necessity."<sup>4</sup> Hence, he contends that "the actions of matter have no necessity" except constant union, and that it is "the observation" of this constant union "which produces the inference." He next professes to show that "our actions have a constant union with our motives, tempers, and circumstances,"<sup>5</sup> and that "as the *union*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 445.<sup>2</sup> P. 468.<sup>3</sup> P. 181.<sup>4</sup> P. 182.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

betwixt motives and actions has the same constancy, as that in any natural operations, so its influence on the understanding is also the same, in *determining* us to infer the existence of one from that of another."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he affirms:<sup>2</sup> "I dare be positive, no one will ever endeavor to refute these reasonings otherwise than by altering my definitions, and assigning a different meaning to the terms of *cause, and effect, and necessity, and liberty, and chance.*" Hume then states three reasons for the prevalence of the doctrine of liberty:<sup>3</sup> (1) The difficulty of thinking, after an act has been performed, that one was necessitated to perform it; (2) a false sensation of the liberty of indifference; (3) the mistaken belief that libertarianism is more favorable than necessitarianism to the interests of morality and religion. Finally, he insists that his doctrine of necessity "is so essential to religion and morality, that without it there must ensue an absolute subversion of both, and that every other supposition is entirely destructive to all laws both *divine* and *human.*"<sup>4</sup>

The treatment of liberty and necessity is somewhat fuller in the Inquiry than in Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. This fact is due chiefly to the insertion of some of the material that was omitted in the abbreviated discussion on the probability of causes,<sup>5</sup> and to the development of the religious aspect of the question of free will. In spite of these differences, the argument is essentially the same as that in the earlier work. The author finds, as before, that the two elements of necessity are "the constant

<sup>1</sup> P. 185; cf. IV, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> P. 188.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 188, 189.

<sup>4</sup> P. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. I, p. 430; IV, p. 71.



*conjunction* of similar objects, and the consequent *inference* from one to the other.’’<sup>1</sup> This is the only kind of necessity that is discoverable in nature, and it exists in human conduct equally as in the external world.<sup>2</sup> Then Hume assigns reasons “why all mankind, though they have ever, without hesitation, acknowledged the doctrine of necessity, in their whole practice and reasoning, have yet discovered such a reluctance to acknowledge it in words, and have rather shown a propensity, in all ages, to profess the contrary opinion.’’<sup>3</sup> And he concludes with an argument to show, “that the doctrines, both of necessity and of liberty, as above explained, are not only consistent with morality and religion, but are absolutely essential to its support.’’<sup>4</sup>

As usual, in the Inquiry there are differences in the form of statement. The more significant of these are the following:<sup>5</sup> (1) The omission of the preliminary definition of will.<sup>6</sup> A definition of will was given in the earlier work, because the subject of liberty and necessity, occurring as it does in connection with the will, was discussed under that head. (2) The insertion of a more specific definition of liberty than that given formerly.<sup>7</sup> Hume now thought that “a few intelligible definitions” would soon “put an end to the whole controversy.’’<sup>8</sup> (3) The more emphatic, and the repeated assertion that all mankind “have always been of the same opinion” with regard to the doctrine of liberty and necessity, and that “the whole controversy has hitherto turned merely upon words.’’<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 67.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 67-75.<sup>3</sup> P. 75.<sup>4</sup> P. 79.<sup>5</sup> Cf. Selby-Bigge, *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xviii.<sup>6</sup> II, p. 181.<sup>7</sup> P. 78; cf. II, p. 188.<sup>8</sup> P. 66.<sup>9</sup> Pp. 66, 67, 68, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78; cf. II, pp. 181, 188, 190.

(4) A much fuller discussion of the religious aspect of the question.<sup>1</sup>

The last change specified is by far the most important in this section of the Inquiry. Two causes are assigned—the second in a foot-note<sup>2</sup>—why “all mankind, though they have ever, . . . acknowledged the doctrine of necessity, in their whole practice and reasoning, have yet discovered such a reluctance to acknowledge it in words.”<sup>3</sup> These are similar to the first two causes assigned in the earlier work. The third cause mentioned in Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, why the doctrine of necessity has not been more generally accepted, viz., its supposed dangerous consequences for morality and religion, Hume now makes a subject of special treatment. He affirms that the doctrines of both liberty and necessity “as above explained,” are not only consistent with morality, but “are absolutely essential to its support.” Liberty means “a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will”;<sup>4</sup> while necessity is “the constant *conjunction* of similar objects, and the consequent *inference* from one to the other.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, with liberty and necessity so defined, and while insisting that this doctrine is essential to the support of morality and religion, the author pretends not “to have obviated or removed all objections” to his theory.<sup>6</sup> He contends, however, that his doctrine is not worse off, in this respect, than is any other, and asserts that there are “inextricable difficulties, and even contradictions” in every system. “To reconcile the indifference and contingency of

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 79–84; cf. II, pp. 189–192.

<sup>2</sup> P. 77.

<sup>3</sup> P. 75.

<sup>4</sup> P. 78.

<sup>5</sup> P. 67.

<sup>6</sup> P. 81.

human actions with prescience," he declares, "or to defend absolute decrees, and yet free the Deity from being the author of sin, has been found hitherto to exceed all the power of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding some minor differences the doctrine of liberty and necessity is the same in both works.

There is no valid ground for the statement of Hyslop<sup>2</sup> that, on this question, Hume is inconsistent with his doctrine of necessity as explained in the *Treatise*. Necessity, as defined in the *Inquiry*, consists only in the constant conjunction of like objects or phenomena, and in the inference of the mind from one to the other.<sup>3</sup> This is exactly its meaning in the *Treatise*.<sup>4</sup> But this is not the doctrine of determinism as commonly understood. It is equivalent to uniform or rational conduct, and is perfectly consistent with some forms of libertarianism. In fact, it is not libertarianism which Hume refutes, but chance, or liberty of indifference. His doctrine of necessity is the same as that of liberty of spontaneity. In Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature* he asserts:<sup>5</sup> "Few are capable of distinguishing betwixt the liberty of *spontaneity*, as it is called in the schools, and the liberty of *indifference*; betwixt that which is opposed to violence, and that which means a negation of necessity and cause. The first is even the most common sense of the word; and as it is only that species of liberty, which it concerns us to preserve, our thoughts have been principally turned towards it, and have

<sup>1</sup> P. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume's Treatise of Morals*, p. 33; cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, p. 587.

<sup>3</sup> P. 79.      <sup>4</sup> Cf. I, pp. 450-464; II, p. 182.      <sup>5</sup> P. 188.

almost universally confounded it with the other." Similarly, in the Inquiry, he says:<sup>1</sup> "By liberty, then, we can only mean a *power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will*; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may. Now this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one, who is not a prisoner and in chains. Here then is no subject of dispute. . . . And if the definition above mentioned be admitted; liberty, when opposed to necessity, not to constraint, is the same thing with chance; which is universally allowed to have no existence."

In short, Hume's doctrine of liberty and necessity was clearly in advance of the thought of his age. Far from lowering the dignity of mind, on the contrary, Hume elevated the qualities of matter. In accordance with the tendencies of modern science, and in conformity with the spirit of an idealistic philosophy, the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature* reverently declared:<sup>2</sup> "I do not ascribe to the will that unintelligible necessity, which is supposed to lie in matter. But I ascribe to matter, that intelligible quality, call it necessity or not, which the most rigorous orthodoxy does or must allow to belong to the will. I change, therefore, nothing in the received systems, with regard to the will, but only with regard to material objects." And in the later work, with equal clearness and candor, he asserted:<sup>3</sup> "But surely we ascribe nothing to the actions of the mind, but what every one does, and must readily allow of. We change no circumstance in the received orthodox system with regard to the will, but only in that with regard to material objects and causes."

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 78, 79.

<sup>2</sup> II, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> P. 80.



The examination of the doctrine of liberty and necessity, in the Inquiry, follows very appropriately that of the idea of cause and effect, as one of the practical applications of Hume's theory of causation. And it might very well have been inserted in the later work for that purpose. The author claims, at the outset, that his argument has "novelty," that it "promises at least some decision of the controversy, and will not much disturb [the reader's] ease by any intricate or obscure reasoning."<sup>1</sup> But although he entered upon this discussion with peace on his lips, it is much to be feared he had war in his heart. For the only important change of treatment which the subject received is the fuller development of the ethical and religious aspect of the question. The argument, in its new form, constitutes a piece with the sections on "Miracles" and "The Practical Consequences of Natural Religion." The essay on miracles Hume intended to publish in the Treatise, but was "afraid" it would give "too much offence" as the world was then disposed.<sup>2</sup> The Treatise, however, did not reach "such distinction, as even to excite a murmur among the zealots."<sup>3</sup> Hume was determined that the Inquiry should succeed better. And it did. The author, it is true, on his return from Italy, "had the mortification to find all England in a ferment, on account of Dr. Middleton's Free Enquiry," while his own performance "was entirely overlooked and neglected."<sup>4</sup> Very soon, however, he learned that the sale of his works was increasing, and that new editions of them were demanded. Millar printed off a

<sup>1</sup> P. 66.<sup>2</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 63.<sup>3</sup> *My Own Life*.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

second edition of the Inquiry, in 1750, but delayed publishing until the following year "because of the earthquakes."<sup>1</sup> "Answers by Reverends, and Right Reverends" soon came out two or three in a year, and Hume inferred from "Dr. Warburton's railing," that his books—"all but the unfortunate Treatise"—were beginning to be esteemed "in good company."<sup>2</sup>

§ 37. *The Reason of Animals*.—In order to confirm the truth of his system by enlarging the sphere of his experiments,<sup>3</sup> Hume devoted the last section of Part III in the Treatise to a discussion of the reason of animals. "This doctrine," he says,<sup>4</sup> "furnishes us with a kind of touchstone, by which we may try every system in this species of philosophy." His line of argument is as follows: Men are conscious that, in adapting means to ends, they are guided by reason. Animals perform like actions; therefore, they are possessed of reason like that of men. Thus he asserts:<sup>5</sup> "It is from the resemblance of external actions of animals to those we ourselves perform, that we judge their internal likewise to resemble ours; and the same principle of reasoning, carried one step farther, will make us conclude that since our internal actions resemble each other, the causes, from which they are derived, must also be resembling."

It may be observed that, in an earlier part of the work, Hume recognized two kinds of reasoning, demonstrative, and probable;<sup>6</sup> and that it is only the latter, probable or experiential reasoning, which he treats in the present section. He now distinguishes between those actions of animals "which are of a vulgar

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 300.    <sup>2</sup> *My Own Life*.    <sup>3</sup> P. 468.

<sup>4</sup> P. 469.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> I, pp. 373, 376.

nature," and "those more extraordinary instances of sagacity," known as instinctive acts. The former actions proceed from reasoning similar to "that which appears in human nature," that is, from a present impression of sense or memory and the observation of the constant conjunction of similar objects in past experience.<sup>1</sup> The latter actions Hume does not attempt to explain, though he seems to regard them as closely related to the former. For "reason," he declares, "is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls." True, it is an instinct which arises from "past observation and experience," as contrasted with instinct proper which arises immediately from nature. But no one can explain why nature should produce one kind of instinct in this way through habit, and produce another kind of instinct immediately and directly.<sup>2</sup>

The philosophy of human nature, therefore, explains the reasoning of men and of animals on the same principle. Moreover, according to the author, the reasoning of men and animals cannot be satisfactorily explained otherwise than on a single principle. For if on the one hand, the reasoning process, or the reasoning faculty in man is of such a profound or abstract nature that animals cannot be regarded as possessing it, then neither can children nor some uneducated persons be thought to have it. And if on the other hand, reason is attributed to these latter, it cannot logically be denied to many species of animals. The only kind of reasoning, however, that animals are capable of performing is inference, or transition from a present impression of sense or memory to a related

<sup>1</sup> P. 470.

<sup>2</sup> P. 471.

idea by means of association and custom.<sup>1</sup> And this is precisely that in which Hume professes to have already shown the reasoning of men concerning matters of fact to consist. Here then he claims to have not merely "a strong confirmation," but rather "an invincible proof" of the truth of his system.<sup>2</sup>

In the Inquiry also, the author hopes that the examination of the reason of animals "will serve to confirm" his "former observations." Any theory which explains "the operations of the understanding, or the origin and connection of the passions in man," will acquire additional authority if it "is requisite to explain the same phenomena in all other animals."<sup>3</sup> He regards animals as performing two kinds of acts: those learned by experience, and those prompted by instinct.<sup>4</sup> The former proceed from education and custom; thus Hume remarks:<sup>5</sup> "It is custom alone, which engages animals, from every object, that strikes their senses, to infer its usual attendant, and carries their imagination, from the appearance of the one, to conceive the other, in that particular manner, which we denominate *belief*." And he adds: "No other explication can be given of this operation, in all the higher, as well as lower classes of sensitive beings, which fall under our notice and observation." On the other hand, instincts are derived from "the original hand of nature." Of them no explanation is offered. Hume still speaks of experimental reasoning as "a species of instinct." It is different of course from instinct proper, in that it arises from experience and custom; while instinct proper, coming from the original hand of nature, is capable of little or no improvement.

<sup>1</sup> P. 471.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>3</sup> P. 85.<sup>4</sup> Pp. 85, 88.<sup>5</sup> P. 87.



Besides a slight change in the order of discussion, the only difference of note, in the Inquiry, is the explicit recognition that there are two kinds of reasoning, viz., reasoning concerning ideas—"comparisons of ideas,"—and reasoning concerning matters of fact—"experimental reasoning."<sup>1</sup> Relations or comparisons of ideas Hume regards as "the proper objects of [man's] intellectual faculties."<sup>2</sup> And he asserts that animals do not reason in this sense of the term. Although the distinction here drawn, between demonstrative and probable reasoning, is not made in the section on the reason of animals in the Treatise, it was made repeatedly in other parts of the work.<sup>3</sup> Even in the section of the Treatise under discussion, Hume implies that animals do not reason in the narrower meaning of the word, when he states that "they can never by any arguments form a general conclusion, that those objects, of which they have had no experience, resemble those of which they have."<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding some modifications, therefore, in the manner of treatment, the standpoint of the later work, on this question, does not differ in any essential respect from that of the earlier.

Huxley contends that, while Hume seemed to regard the reasoning of men and of animals as being different in kind, he really held that it is only different in degree. "It will be observed," he says,<sup>5</sup> "that Hume appears to contrast the 'inference of the animal' with the 'process of argument or reasoning in man.' But it would be a complete misapprehension

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 86, 88.

<sup>2</sup> P. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. 372, 373, 375, 376, 390, 472, 473.

<sup>4</sup> P. 471.

<sup>5</sup> *Hume*, p. 107; cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, p. 557.

of his intention, if we were to suppose, that he thereby means to imply that there is any real difference between the two processes." If one examines only the exposition of the Treatise, one may find some ground for Huxley's assertion. In the earlier work, the author states that no truth appears to him to be more evident "than that beasts are endowed with thought and reasoning, as well as men."<sup>1</sup> When one turns to the Inquiry, however, one discovers that Hume contrasts the "inference of the animal" with the "process of argument" in man, and denies that animals reason in the latter sense. As has just been pointed out, he recognized two kinds of reasoning, viz., reasoning concerning ideas, and reasoning concerning matters of fact. "Relations or comparisons of ideas, . . . are the proper objects of [man's] intellectual faculties." But arguments of this nature "lie too abstruse for the observation of [animals'] imperfect understandings." Huxley did not seem to take sufficient account of language as a factor in the reasoning process.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that Hume's discussion on the reason of animals, except in so far as it prepared the way for the science of comparative psychology, is of exceedingly little value. It throws no light whatever on the question which is much agitated at the present day, viz., Do animals reason? The reasoning processes which Hume attributes to animals are merely instances of "association by contiguity." The real problem is, whether the mental processes of animals ever take the form of "association by similarity"?—a problem which, despite the

<sup>1</sup> P. 469.

valuable and interesting work of Mills, Thorndike, and other enthusiastic investigators in this field, is still almost as far from a satisfactory solution as it ever was.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE IDEA OF MATERIAL SUBSTANCE, AND OF AN EXTERNAL WORLD.

§ 38. *The Idea of Material Substance.*—Respecting the idea of material substance Berkeley stands in a relation to Locke similar to that in which Fichte stands to Kant. As Fichte rejected the *ding-an-sich* as the ground of phenomena, so did Berkeley the unknown something as the ground of material qualities. Hume merely followed in the track of Berkeley. His doctrine of substance, as presented in the Treatise, is well known. It is stated briefly in Part I, and is an immediate consequence of the fundamental principles of the philosophy of human nature. Since all ideas are derived from impressions; and since impressions are of two kinds, sensation, and reflection; the idea of substance must be derived from an impression of sensation, or of reflection. If it be derived from an impression of sensation, it must be a color, sound, taste, etc.; and if it be derived from an impression of reflection, it must be a passion, or an emotion.<sup>1</sup> Each of these alternatives is absurd. Hence, the idea of substance, if taken to be something other than that of a group of qualities, is a fiction. It is a complex idea resulting from the operation of the laws of association,<sup>2</sup> and is “nothing but a collection of simple ideas,” or a group of qualities with a particular name assigned to them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 324.

<sup>2</sup> P. 321.

<sup>3</sup> P. 324.



In part IV, in accordance with his usual mode of procedure in the earlier work, Hume gives an account of the genesis of the idea of substance.<sup>1</sup> On observing the successive qualities of an object through a brief lapse of time, when the succession is smooth and gradual the mind is carried insensibly along by an easy transition, and does not perceive the change any more than it would did it contemplate a single unchangeable object. In this way arises the idea of identity. But when the smooth succession of qualities is hindered, either by a break in the sequence, or by a rapid change in the object, the natural progress of the thought is interrupted. Then there arises the idea of diversity. And as the ideas of identity and diversity are contrary to each other, the imagination, in order to solve the contradiction, feigns an unknown something which is supposed to remain invariably the same throughout the change of qualities. This unknown something is substance. It is a fiction postulated by the mind in order to unite the various qualities of objects or impressions, and is postulated according to natural laws. The fiction of an underlying substance, however, is wholly unnecessary, because qualities may exist by themselves. "Every quality being a distinct thing from another," says Hume,<sup>2</sup> "may be conceived to exist apart, and may exist apart, not only from every other quality, but from that unintelligible chimera of a substance." Hence there is a twofold argument against the validity of the idea (1) It is unnecessary; (2) it is impossible.

In the Inquiry there is no discussion of the idea of substance. As has already been mentioned,<sup>3</sup> the treat-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 506, 507.

<sup>2</sup> P. 508.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 80, 81.

ment of complex ideas—substances, modes, and relations—is omitted. There are some incidental references, however, which have a bearing upon the idea of material substance, and which may be examined briefly. Hume asserts that the qualities of “solidity, extension,” and “motion,” are “all complete in themselves”;<sup>1</sup> and that these qualities—the primary—are on the same basis as are the secondary.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it may be concluded that the idea of substance, if understood as anything different from the idea of a group of qualities, is unnecessary. Again, the criterion of the validity of ideas remains the same as it was in the Treatise.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it may be inferred that the idea is impossible. According to the logical standpoint of the Inquiry, therefore, the idea of substance is both unnecessary and impossible, as it had been declared to be in the Treatise. In confirmation of this conclusion is the following passage from a letter of Hume to Henry Home in 1746:<sup>4</sup> “As to the idea of substance, I must own, that as it has no access to the mind by any of our senses or feelings, it has always appeared to me to be nothing but an imaginary centre of union amongst the different and variable qualities that are to be found in every piece of matter.”

It may be inferred, therefore, that Hume's view of material substance was the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he composed the Treatise. The premises remain the same, the conclusion only is omitted. For this omission several explanations have been of-

<sup>1</sup> P. 53.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 125-127.<sup>3</sup> Pp. 14, 16, 17, 52.<sup>4</sup> Tytler, *Memoirs of H. H. of Kames*, I, p. 124; cf. Long, *Ueber Hume's Lehre v. d. Ideen u. d. Substance*, pp. 34, 36 n.

ferred. It is a common opinion that, shortly after the publication of the *Treatise*, Hume became conscious that his principle of connection among ideas was very defective. Thereupon his former account of fictitious ideas would appear to him to be unsatisfactory. And as he was unable to devise a more plausible process of their derivation, he would naturally avoid a discussion of the subject in the *Inquiry*. There does not appear to be much weight in this argument. Hume recognized that his principle of connection among ideas, when used to explain the fiction of self or of personal identity, was very defective, but not when used to explain the idea of cause and effect or of material substance. Selby-Bigge<sup>1</sup> asserts that "substance is passed over," in the later work, "probably both from the difficulty of the subject, and because in the *Enquiry* Hume is not nearly so anxious to show that the fundamental popular conceptions are fictitious." The former supposition appears to be groundless, inasmuch as the doctrine of substance is not any more difficult of treatment than is that of causation. But the latter statement undoubtedly contains an element of truth; for the *Inquiry* was written under different circumstances, and for a different class of readers than was the *Treatise*. In the later work, Hume desired to present his theory of knowledge, or at least the more important parts of it, in a brief and popular manner. It is not surprising, therefore, that the discussion on substance was omitted. Moreover, the division of complex ideas into substances, modes, and relations was an inheritance

<sup>1</sup> *Hume's Enquiries*, p. xiii.

from Locke. Hume was not so much dependent on Locke when he wrote the Inquiry as when he wrote the Treatise.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the omission of this classification of ideas, and of the treatment of the particular topics included under it may have been due in part to that circumstance.

§ 39. *The Idea of an External World.*—In the last section of Part II of the Treatise, Hume discusses the ideas of existence and external existence, as a preparation for the examination of knowledge and probability. He states that the idea of existence is “the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent,”<sup>2</sup> and concludes:<sup>3</sup> “Since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are derived from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that it is impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions.” This discussion of external existence is only introductory. The full treatment of the subject is given in Part IV, where the question of the existence of an external world is dealt with under two heads: (1) The vulgar hypothesis; and (2) the philosophical.

I. The Vulgar Hypothesis. The vulgar hypothesis of external existence is the assumption that sense perceptions are external material objects. “It is certain,” says Hume,<sup>4</sup> “that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greater part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material exist-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I, pp. 308, 342; IV, p. 17 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> P. 370.

<sup>3</sup> P. 371.

<sup>4</sup> P. 495; cf. p. 491.



ence.” And since it is vain to ask, Whether there be body or not? as this is a point which must always be taken for granted, nature not having left it a matter of choice, the question which he raises now is, “What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?” In answer, he professes to show:<sup>1</sup> (1) How the vulgar hypothesis of continued and distinct or independent existence arises; (2) why this kind of existence is attended with belief? Upon the elaborate process of derivation and explanation it is unnecessary to enter. It is sufficient to note the following characteristic features of the discussion in the Treatise: (1) “Every impression, external and internal, passions, affections, sensations, pains and pleasures, are originally on the same footing.”<sup>2</sup> (2) The idea of continued and distinct existence, or of the external existence of perceptions is derived neither from the senses,<sup>3</sup> nor from reason,<sup>4</sup> but from the imagination.<sup>5</sup> Objects have a certain coherence as they appear to the senses. And the imagination, “when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course, without any new impulse.” In this manner, from the constancy and coherence of perceptions arises the idea of their continued and distinct or independent existence. (3) Belief in the external existence of perceptions arises through the effect upon the imagination of the force and vivacity of the successive resembling perceptions,<sup>6</sup> in accordance with Hume’s general theory.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 478.    <sup>2</sup> P. 480; *cf.* p. 371.    <sup>3</sup> Pp. 478–482.    <sup>4</sup> P. 483.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 484–495.    <sup>6</sup> Pp. 496, 497.    <sup>7</sup> *Cf.* pp. 182, 183, above.

In the first part of section xii of the Inquiry, there are a few references to the existence of an external world. The distinction between the vulgar hypothesis of external existence, and the philosophical, is not explicitly made in these terms; but it is clear that the distinction which is here recognized, is the same as that made in the earlier work.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the vulgar hypothesis, Hume's position may be represented as follows: (1) The primary and secondary qualities of objects are on the same basis, and are only perceptions in the mind.<sup>2</sup> (2) All men, and even animals, "are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses," and to suppose an external universe to exist; and "when men follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be the external objects."<sup>3</sup> (3) An explanation of belief is not given, but the doctrine of belief in the Inquiry is essentially the same as that in the Treatise,<sup>4</sup> viz., belief consists in the force, vivacity, steadiness, etc., of an impression or idea.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it may be concluded that, on the question of the vulgar hypothesis, the position of both works is practically the same. The only significant difference consists in omissions; the treatment in the earlier work being detailed and explicit, but in the later, brief, to a large extent indeed only implied.

It may be observed that Brede professes to find, in the Inquiry, an important difference on this question. He asserts:<sup>6</sup> "[The vulgar hypothesis of an external

<sup>1</sup> P. 125.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 124, 125.<sup>3</sup> P. 124.<sup>4</sup> Cf. pp. 177-182, above.<sup>5</sup> Pp. 40, 43.<sup>6</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 47, 48.

world] is here based solely on a supposed deception of the senses, an assumption which, in the *Treatise*, was directly rejected." The difference here pointed out is only one of the meaning of words. Hume is not precise in his use of language. He uses imagination in several different senses;—as contrasted with memory,<sup>1</sup> as opposed to reason,<sup>2</sup> and yet as equivalent to reason or the understanding,<sup>3</sup> as synonymous with sense,<sup>4</sup> and as synonymous with nature or instinct.<sup>5</sup> In the account, in the later work, he does not explicitly state that the vulgar hypothesis arises through an illusion of the senses, nor in any manner different from that in which he regarded it as originating in the earlier. He says it arises from "a natural instinct."<sup>6</sup> In the *Treatise* he said it arises from nature, instinct, or imagination.<sup>7</sup> True, in the *Inquiry*, Hume admits that, on this topic, there is a conflict between the senses and reason, as if to imply that the vulgar hypothesis is derived from the senses, and the philosophical hypothesis from the reason.<sup>8</sup> But in a similar manner, in the earlier work, he admitted the existence of a conflict, on the same subject.<sup>9</sup> Of course it is admitted that Hume, in the *Inquiry*, seems to regard the idea of external existence as being derived through the senses.<sup>10</sup> But it must not be overlooked that, in the *Treatise*, he uses "senses" as a convenient term for imagination, or the principles that give rise to the vulgar hypothesis. Thus he asserts:<sup>11</sup> "There is a direct and total opposition betwixt

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 317.    <sup>2</sup> I, pp. 416 n., 502.    <sup>3</sup> I, p. 547; cf. p. 505.

<sup>4</sup> I, p. 504.    <sup>5</sup> I, pp. 478, 501, 502.    <sup>6</sup> Pp. 124, 127.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 478, 501, 502.    <sup>8</sup> Pp. 125, 127.    <sup>9</sup> P. 504.    <sup>10</sup> P. 124.

<sup>11</sup> P. 516.

our reason and our senses; or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continued and independent existence of body." It is obvious, therefore, that since no real diversity of view exists on this question, the briefer treatment in the later work is the cause of the apparent diversity of statement.

II. The Philosophical Hypothesis. The philosophical hypothesis of an external world is the assumption of "the double existence of perceptions and objects," of perceptions in the mind, and of external objects corresponding to them.<sup>1</sup> According to the account in the Treatise, the philosophical hypothesis arises in the following manner: after arriving at the vulgar hypothesis, and acquiring a belief that perceptions are external objects, if one makes a few experiments, or reasons about the matter, one immediately perceives that the existence of perceptions is interrupted, and that "the doctrine of the independent existence" of sensible perceptions "is contrary to the plainest experience."<sup>2</sup> Then, in order to solve the contradiction, the philosophers invent the hypothesis of "the double existence of perceptions and objects," and suppose the former "to be interrupted, and perishing," but the latter "to be uninterrupted, and to observe a continued existence and identity."<sup>3</sup> The philosophical hypothesis, however, in the author's estimation, "is only a palliative remedy," and "contains all the difficulties of the vulgar system, as well as some others that are peculiar to itself." It has "no primary recommendation either to reason or the

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 499.

<sup>2</sup> P. 498.

<sup>3</sup> P. 499.



imagination," but "acquires all its influence on the imagination" from the vulgar hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> And Hume<sup>2</sup> concludes: "This skeptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cured, . . . Carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy." On these qualities of mind he relies with a degree of assurance not surpassed by the confidence placed in the principles of common sense by his illustrious countrymen of the Scottish School.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the argument in the second section, Hume claims to show, in the fourth, that if the fundamental principle of modern philosophy—viz., the subjectivity of the secondary qualities of objects,—be admitted, there is no ground for attributing objectivity to the primary qualities, and consequently, no possibility of arriving at a knowledge of external existence. Thus he asserts:<sup>4</sup> "I believe many objections might be made to this system [modern philosophy]: But at present I shall confine myself to one, which is in my opinion very decisive. I assert, that instead of explaining the operations of external objects by its means, we utterly annihilate all these objects, and reduce ourselves to the opinion of the most extravagant skepticism concerning them. If colors, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions [and this he has repeatedly affirmed],<sup>5</sup> nothing we can conceive is possessed of a real, continued, and independent existence; not even motion, extension and solidity, which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on." Then he resolves the primary qualities

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 499, 500.      <sup>2</sup> P. 505.      <sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*      <sup>4</sup> P. 513.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 371, 481, 482, 511, 512, 526.

into secondary: "The idea of motion depends on that of extension, and the idea of extension on that of solidity." Solidity is inconceivable alone, because it depends on other secondary qualities. "And upon the whole," says Hume,<sup>1</sup> "[we] must conclude, that after the exclusion of colors, sounds, heat and cold from the rank of external existences, there remains nothing, which can afford us a just and constituent idea of body." In Part IV, he also refers to Part II, and claims that there he has already shown "the notion of external existence, when taken for something specifically different from our perceptions," to be "an absurdity."<sup>2</sup>

In the twelfth section of the Inquiry, Hume gives a brief account of the philosophical hypothesis of external existence. After referring to the universal belief of mankind in the existence of an external world, a belief that "the very images, presented by the senses," are "the external objects," he proceeds:<sup>3</sup> "But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object. The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: But the real table, which exists independently of us, suffers no alteration: It was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind. These are the obvious dictates of reason; and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the ex-

<sup>1</sup> P. 514.<sup>2</sup> P. 479.<sup>3</sup> Pp. 124, 125.

istences, which we consider, when we say, *this horse* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent." But what existences are those that are thought to remain "uniform and independent"? Hume replies:<sup>1</sup> "So far, then, are we necessitated by reasoning to contradict or depart from the primary instincts of nature, and to embrace a new system with regard to the evidence of our senses. But here philosophy finds herself extremely embarrassed, when she would justify this new system, and obviate the cavils and objections of the skeptics. . . . To justify this pretended philosophical system, by a chain of clear and convincing arguments, or even any appearance of argument, exceeds the power of all human capacity."

In the Inquiry also, the distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects is referred to in a manner similar to that in the Treatise. "It is universally allowed by modern inquirers," says Hume,<sup>2</sup> "that all the sensible qualities of objects, such as hard, soft, hot, cold, white, black, etc., are merely secondary, and exist not in the objects themselves, but are perceptions of the mind, without any external archetype or model, which they represent. If this be allowed, with regard to secondary qualities, it must also follow, with regard to the supposed primary qualities of extension and solidity; nor can the latter be any more entitled to that denomination than the former. The idea of extension is entirely acquired from the senses of sight and feeling; and if all the qualities, perceived by the senses, be in the mind

<sup>1</sup> P. 125.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 126, 127.

[and this is what he maintains],<sup>1</sup> not in the object, the same conclusion must reach the idea of extension, which is wholly dependent on the sensible ideas or the ideas of secondary qualities. Nothing can save us from this conclusion, but the asserting, that the ideas of those primary qualities are attained by *Abstraction*; an opinion, which, if we examine it accurately, we shall find to be unintelligible, and even absurd."

On the question of the philosophical hypothesis of external existence, therefore, the standpoint of both works is identical. As in almost every other instance, however, the mode of treatment is different. The account in the *Inquiry* is so brief that one learns its full significance only by reading it in connection with the exposition in the *Treatise*. The tone also is less dogmatic, and the manner of expression more careful. These differences are only such as one would naturally expect, if one takes into account Hume's temperament, and the circumstances under which the respective books were written.<sup>2</sup>

§ 40. *Conclusion*.—The chief points in the chapter may now be brought together.

1. The Idea of Material Substance. In the *Treatise*, Hume professed to show that the idea of material substance can be derived neither from sensation, nor from reflection. It is, therefore a fiction, produced by the imagination. The idea of identity arises on viewing a series of successive resembling perceptions of the same object. This idea, when the series is broken, gives place to that of diversity. Then, to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 13-17, 61, 124, 125, 126.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 63, 98.



solve the contradiction, the imagination posits the idea of substance, as the ground of union for the different perceptions. In a letter to Home, in 1746, Hume expressed the same view as that in the *Treatise*. Consequently, it may be concluded that his position was unchanged when he wrote the *Inquiry*. In the later work, the discussion is omitted. The cause for this omission is not positively known, but was probably desire for brevity, for simplicity, or for popularity.

2. The Idea of an External World. According to the account in the *Treatise*, the mind knows only perceptions.<sup>1</sup> To these perceptions is attributed an independent existence, through the influence of imagination or natural instinct.<sup>2</sup> Reflection shows that this belief is contrary to reason.<sup>3</sup> To solve the contradiction the mind invents the hypothesis of "the double existence of perceptions and objects."<sup>4</sup> But this assumption is contrary to natural instinct, and besides, cannot be justified by reason.<sup>5</sup> "This philosophical system," Hume asserts,<sup>6</sup> "is the monstrous offspring of two principles, which are contrary to each other, which are both at once embraced by the mind, and which are unable mutually to destroy each other." Then with his accustomed frankness, he gives expression to his own feeling in the following words:<sup>7</sup> "Having thus given an account of all the systems

<sup>1</sup> I, pp. 371, 483, 487, 501, 518; IV, pp. 61, 124, 126.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 478, 484, 491, 493, 495, 501; IV, pp. 124, 125.

<sup>3</sup> I, pp. 498, 501, 504; IV, pp. 124, 125, 127.

<sup>4</sup> I, pp. 499, 501, 502; IV, pp. 125-127.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> I, p. 502; cf. IV, p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> I, p. 504; cf. IV, p. 126.

both popular and philosophical, with regard to external existences, I cannot forbear giving vent to a certain sentiment, which arises upon reviewing those systems. I began this subject with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses, and that this would be the conclusion, I should draw from the whole of my reasoning. But to be ingenuous, I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclined to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such an implicit confidence."

The position of the Inquiry on the question of the existence of an external world is similar to that of the Treatise,<sup>1</sup> except in one respect. In the earlier work, when Hume professes to have shown how belief in external existence arises from the force and vivacity of resembling perceptions, and that the mind knows nothing specifically different from perceptions, he appears as the expounder and advocate of a system of skepticism. In the later work, he omits an account of the derivation of belief in external existence, and appears, not as the exponent of a system, but rather as a dialectician. In the Inquiry, he is a critic of the prevailing systems; in the Treatise, he is not merely a critic, but also the expounder of a new system. While this constructive element gives the earlier work an air of positiveness; from another point of view, it only serves to make the skepticism more pronounced. Hence, it is easy for any one to put forward the claim that either book is more negative, or is more positive than the other. It is most probable, however, that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bain, *Mental and Moral Science*, p. 205; Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 274, 337.

the omissions, in the Inquiry, were due entirely to adventitious circumstances, and not to any real change of view on the part of the author.

Hume's philosophical position on the question of the existence of an external world is still a matter of dispute. On the one hand, it is universally admitted that he affirmed a belief in external existence; and on the other, it is generally recognized that he denied the possibility of any real knowledge of external existence, as something different from perceptions. But between these two extremes lie many intermediate views. Jodl<sup>1</sup> states that, according to Hume, nothing remains of the ideas of matter and external existence but, at most, an unknown, inexplicable something as the cause of perceptions, and which the skeptic will not envy any one. Windelband<sup>2</sup> affirms that the existence of a corporeal world is to be assumed as at most only probable. Falckenberg<sup>3</sup> declares that Hume does not follow Berkeley to the extent of denying external reality. Erdmann asserts:<sup>4</sup> "Hume never doubted, what was regarded beyond everything else as doubtful by the skeptics of antiquity, the existence of what we perceive." Brown<sup>5</sup> holds that, on this question, Hume and Reid are in accord. One cannot prove by reason the existence of an external world, but one believes. Hume emphasizes the first position, and Reid the second; this is all the difference be-

<sup>1</sup> *Leben und Phil. D. H.*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesch. d. n. Phil.*, I, p. 319.

<sup>3</sup> *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Philosophy*, II, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> *Lectures on the Philosophy of Mind*, II, p. 89.

tween them. Webb states:<sup>1</sup> "So far is Hume from dogmatically denying the existence of an external world in external space that he systematically assumes it." And Reid declares:<sup>2</sup> "When we find Bishop Berkeley and Mr. Hume, the acutest metaphysicians of the age, maintaining that there is no such thing as matter in the universe— . . . when we find the last maintaining that there is neither body nor mind— . . . we may be apt to think the whole to be only a dream of fanciful men, who have entangled themselves in cobwebs spun out of their own brain."

It is natural to expect that a question on which there is so much diversity of opinion is extremely difficult accurately to determine. Such is indeed the case. And what the opinion of any individual writer may be, with regard to the problem, seems to be a matter of extremely little moment; for it is reasonable to suppose that, in the future, as in the past, among Hume's interpreters, sentiment rather than reason will give the casting vote on this question. Such consideration, however, will never deter the philosopher from offering a new solution. Hume's position on the question of the existence of an external world appears to be the following: Accepting the existence of perceptions—a form of reality which no one ever doubted,—he professed to explain, both according to the vulgar hypothesis, and according to the philosophical, how, through certain qualities of the imagination, belief in an external world arises. But he

<sup>1</sup> *Veil of Isis*, p. 121; cf. Hunt, *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XI, p. 83; Papillon, *Histoire de la Philosophie Moderne*, II, p. 19; Uhl, *Humes Stellung in d. englischen Phil.*, I, p. 13; Bain, *Mental and Moral Science*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, I, p. 242.



also claimed to show that both these beliefs are irrational and unjustifiable; the first being contrary to reason, the second contrary to natural instinct, and each contradictory to the other. Nevertheless, he asserted that the matter has not been left to choice, that the mind, in accordance with the fundamental principles of human nature, still continues to reason about these contradictory alternatives, and to believe in the existence of an external world. Such existence, however, lies outside the sphere of knowledge, and hence is both unknown and unknowable. The final outcome, therefore, of Hume's reasoning on this question is philosophical or theoretical skepticism. But our philosopher is not a dogmatist; whether there is an external world or not does not trouble him in the least. Nature is able enough to take care of herself; and nature necessitates an irresistible belief in external existence. This is sufficient for the needs of everyday life. Hence, actually, he is a positivist.

Theoretically, therefore, Hume is a skeptic; practically, he is a realist; and actually, he is a positivist. Consequently, it is not surprising that, notwithstanding his positivism and skepticism, he frequently implies, both in the *Treatise* and in the *Inquiry*, the existence of an external world as unhesitatingly as if he were a philosopher of the Scottish School.<sup>1</sup> The concluding passage of his treatment of the question is characteristic of the author, and significant of his true position. "Carelessness and inattention alone," he says,<sup>2</sup> can afford us any remedy [against the malady of skeptical doubt]. For this reason I rely

<sup>1</sup> *Cf.* I, pp. 317, 342, 461, 462, 549; IV, pp. 23, 25, 28, 46, 47.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 505.

entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world; and going upon that supposition, I intend to examine some general systems both ancient and modern, . . . before I proceed to a more particular inquiry concerning our impressions."

The foundation stone of metaphysics has often become the Achilles' heel. Such it became for Hume. The vulnerable point in his philosophical system, the source of his gravest errors as well as the cause of his greatest difficulties, is his inadequate conception of the self. He failed to realize that self-knowledge is knowledge of something permanent and substantial. This knowledge is the key to all knowledge, since the microcosm is an organic part of the macrocosm. As there is real knowledge of the self, so real knowledge is inherently possible of all other things, in so far as they partake of the nature of self. The transition from knowledge of the self to knowledge of other selves, and even to knowledge of external things, is clearly intelligible as well as perfectly natural.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE, THE SELF, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY.

§ 41. *The Idea of Spiritual Substance.*—The ideas of spiritual substance, self, and personal identity are so closely related to one another, that it is extremely difficult to discuss them separately. It seems that, for Hume, spiritual substance is equivalent to mind in general, self is the concrete or individual mind, and personal identity is a quality or supposed quality of self, viz., its permanence and invariability. With this explanation, the ideas of spiritual substance, self, and personal identity will be treated in their order.

Sidney Smith once humorously remarked: "Bishop Berkeley destroyed the world in one volume octavo, and nothing remained after his time but mind, which experienced a similar fate from Mr. Hume in 1739." Hume's criticism of spiritual substance is merely an application of Berkeley's principle regarding material substance. As Berkeley showed that Locke's idea of material substance, according to his own presuppositions, was a fiction, so Hume showed, in like manner, that his idea of spiritual substance is a fiction also. The doctrine of spiritual substance, as explained in the Treatise, is strictly analogous to that of material substance. There is no impression of substance, either of material, or of spiritual; consequently, there is no valid idea either of material, or of spiritual

substance.<sup>1</sup> An idea of spiritual substance is not needed in the philosophy of human nature, any more than is required an idea of material substance. For thus Hume reasons:<sup>2</sup> "Whatever is clearly conceived may exist; and whatever is clearly conceived, after any manner, may exist after the same manner. This is one principle, which has been already acknowledged. Again, every thing, which is different, is distinguishable, and every thing which is distinguishable, is separable by the imagination. This is another principle. My conclusion from both is, that since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be considered as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence." The genesis of the fictitious idea of spiritual substance Hume likewise attempts to explain in the same way as he explained the origin of the idea of material substance.<sup>3</sup>

In the Inquiry, there is no treatment of spiritual substance. Hume's last word on this subject is in the appendix. Here spiritual substance and self are treated together, as if they meant the same thing; otherwise, the import of the discussion is similar to that of the exposition in the Treatise. Hume remarks:<sup>4</sup> "Philosophers begin to be reconciled to the principle, that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the idea of particular qualities. This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to

<sup>1</sup> P. 517.

<sup>2</sup> P. 518.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 535, 536.

<sup>4</sup> I, p. 559.



the mind, that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions." Again, he says:<sup>1</sup> "When we talk of self or substance, we must have an idea annexed to these terms, otherwise they are altogether unintelligible. Every idea is derived from precedent impressions; and we have no impression of self or substance, as something simple or individual. We have, therefore, no idea of them in that sense." Finally, the idea of spiritual substance is not necessary; for he asserts:<sup>2</sup> "Whatever is distinct, is distinguishable; and whatever is distinguishable, is separable by the thought or imagination. All perceptions are distinct. They are, therefore, distinguishable, and separable, and may be conceived as separately existent, and may exist separately, without any contradiction or absurdity." It is manifest that the doctrine of spiritual substance is exactly the same in the appendix as in the Treatise. Consequently, there is a strong probability that when Hume wrote the Inquiry he had not changed his view, in any important respect, upon this question.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for omitting the discussion, in the later work, were in large measure similar to those for omitting a specific treatment of material substance.<sup>4</sup>

§ 42. *The Idea of Self*.—The tacit implication of the existence of the self Hume, no doubt, found helpful when explaining belief, both in the relation of cause and effect, and in the existence of an external

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 558.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bain, *Mental and Moral Science*, p. 205; Windelband, *Gesch. d. n. Phil.*, p. 324.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. pp. 208-209, above.

world. But having explained these doctrines, at least to his own satisfaction, he was in a position, at the end of his system, to abolish the idea of self as a fiction, like the many preceding ones. Again he asks, from what impression can the idea of self be derived? And since he regarded a numerically identical and permanent self as something that continues "invariably the same" throughout the whole course of one's life—a grain of sand, as it were, or an atom of pure being,—an impression of the self must also be constant and invariable. But "there is no impression constant and invariable." Consequently, there is no impression of self as something that remains the same throughout one's life.<sup>1</sup> What then is the self? "For my part," says Hume,<sup>2</sup> "when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but a perception." "The mind is a kind of theatre," he continues, "where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is composed."

<sup>1</sup> P. 533.

<sup>2</sup> P. 534; cf. pp. 541, 542.

After thus professing to prove that the idea of self is invalid, Hume undertakes to explain the genesis of the fiction. The explanation is exactly similar to that of the fiction of spiritual substance. Successive perceptions, by means of a quality of the imagination, are involuntarily regarded as constituting a continued existence. But the continued existence is interrupted in the course of every-day experience. Then, to solve the contradiction, the mind feigns the idea of self as something permanent and invariable, a fictitious ground of union for the ever-changing ideas of which the actual self is composed.<sup>1</sup>

In the appendix, the idea of self is not distinguished from that of spiritual substance; as already mentioned,<sup>2</sup> both are there treated together. And as no explicit reference is made in the Inquiry to either topic, further discussion of the subject is for the present unnecessary. We shall return to this question in a following section.<sup>3</sup>

§ 43. *The Idea of Personal Identity*.—If the self is “nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement,”<sup>4</sup> it may be asked, How does the idea of personal identity arise? Personal identity, Hume acknowledges, in the Treatise has become a great question in philosophy, “especially of late years in England.” He thinks it is to be explained in the same manner as the identity of plants, houses, ships, or rivers.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the identity which is commonly ascribed to “the mind of man” is only “a

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 535, 536; cf. II, pp. 74, 142.

<sup>2</sup> P. 236.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 242–256.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 534.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 538, 539.

fictitious one." "It is still true," he says,<sup>1</sup> "that every distinct perception, . . . is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception. . . . But, as, notwithstanding this distinction and separability we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity, a question naturally arises concerning this relation of identity; whether it be something that really binds our several perceptions together, or only associates their ideas in the imagination." This matter is easily decided by reference to the theory of cause and effect. "For from thence it evidently follows," continues Hume,<sup>2</sup> "that identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them." These qualities of union are the relations of resemblance and causation.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of personal identity, like those of self and spiritual substance, is not dealt with in the Inquiry. Omitting an incidental reference in the Dialogues,<sup>4</sup> this subject received final treatment in the appendix. The account given here has been justly characterized<sup>5</sup> as one of those comprehensive reviews of the significance and the difficulties of Hume's empirical theory of cognition, which mark the rare acuteness of his intellect. In this reconsideration, Hume confesses<sup>6</sup> that, "upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*," he finds himself involved in "such a labyrinth," that he knows neither "how

<sup>1</sup> P. 540.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>3</sup> P. 541.<sup>4</sup> II, p. 406.<sup>5</sup> Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*, p. 354.<sup>6</sup> I, p. 558.



to correct" his former opinions, nor "how to render them consistent." He then restates the arguments that induced him to deny "the strict and proper identity and simplicity of a self or thinking being." These arguments are similar to those advanced previously in the Treatise. After this restatement, however, Hume brings forward an objection which did not appear in the earlier work. This objection is to the effect, that he is now unable satisfactorily to explain the principle of connection among perceptions. "Having thus loosened all our particular perceptions," he says,<sup>1</sup> "when I proceed to explain the principle of connection, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings could have induced me to receive it." But "the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings"—that is, of the reasoning concerning the ideas of substance and necessary connection—is so clear that he is compelled to accept it also. Hence, he concludes as follows:<sup>2</sup> "In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz., *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences.* Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive any real connection among them, there would be no difficulty in the case. For my part, I must plead the privilege of a skeptic, and confess, that

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 559.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflections, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile these contradictions."

Hume did not return to the question of personal identity. In the *Inquiry*, he still advocates the fundamental principle, that "all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences,"<sup>1</sup> and maintains that "the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences."<sup>2</sup> There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that he was ever able to reconcile the contradiction of which he speaks. And neither is there any ground for thinking that this standing contradiction modified to any appreciable extent, either the doctrine or the contents of the *Inquiry*. This is not the view, however, which is generally held by Hume's interpreters. Some have professed to find in the confession in the appendix a key to the solution of many difficulties regarding the meaning and position of the later work—an explanation of many omissions, and a ground for many apparent changes of doctrine. The question is an important one; but unhappily, one that does not admit of an easy answer. In fact, Hume's doctrine of the self, in the *Inquiry*, is generally recognized as being the most perplexing problem in the whole work. Hence, we devote to the consideration of this subject an additional section.

§ 44. *The Relation of the Treatise to the Inquiry on the Doctrine of Self and Personal Identity.*—

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 10, 27, 53, 61, 124, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 27, 52, 61, 75.

Brede<sup>1</sup> and Grimm<sup>2</sup> are among the latest, as well as the ablest representatives of the theory that Hume, when he wrote the *Inquiry*, had become convinced of the existence of a real self and a real personal identity; and that this change of view had a marked effect upon the briefer exposition of his system. As there are no direct, and only a few indirect references to this question in the later work, the reasoning must be largely of the nature of probability. In support of Brede and Grimm's position<sup>3</sup> several arguments are adduced, which may be summarized in the following propositions:—(1) In the *Treatise*, Hume professed to explain the fiction, as well as to refute the doctrines, of self and personal identity. (2) The explanation of these fictions is analogous to that of the fictitious idea of substance, and that of the assumption of external existence. (3) In the appendix, it is acknowledged, not only that the explanation given in the *Treatise* of the fiction of personal identity is "very defective," but also that Hume is now unable to give a derivation of this idea. (4) For these causes, the explanation of the fictitious ideas of substance, self, and personal identity—in fact, all explicit treatment of these subjects,—is omitted in the *Inquiry*. (5) For similar reasons, the assumption of the existence of an external world is attributed, in the later work, to an illusion of the senses; and not, as in the *Treatise*, to a fiction of the imagination. (6) Since Hume, in

<sup>1</sup> *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 46–49.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, pp. 575–577, 580–585.

<sup>3</sup> It may be observed that Grimm's position is not quite so positive as is that of Brede. At times he seems to hold that Hume has merely abandoned the doctrine of the self, as expounded in the *Treatise*, without adopting the view of a real permanent self, as Brede claims.

the appendix, acknowledged himself unable to explain the fiction of personal identity, and yet, in the Inquiry, made frequent use of the ideas of self and self-consciousness, he must, when he wrote the later work, have been convinced of the real existence of the self and personal identity, and thus have renounced the doctrine of the Treatise. (7) In confirmation of this conclusion are the facts: (a) Hume, in the Inquiry, speaks repeatedly of impressions and ideas being present to the mind, without ever saying that the mind is this sum of perceptions; (b) the Inquiry, he asserts, in the advertisement to the posthumous and authoritative edition of his works, and not the Treatise, represents his true position. (8) Finally, in the section on "A particular Providence and a future State," it is unaccountable why Hume did not bring forward his former doctrine of the self as an argument against belief in the immortality of the soul, except on the ground that, in the meantime, he had abandoned that doctrine.

Yet another argument, one hitherto overlooked, may be added to those of Brede and Grimm to complete the reasoning. Henry Home endeavored to persuade Hume not to publish the Inquiry; but in vain.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, in 1751, Home published his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*. One of the main objects of this work was to counteract the influence of Hume's speculative writings.<sup>2</sup> Before publishing, Home apparently sent the manuscript to his friend for perusal. The essay on "Personal Identity" begins as follows:<sup>3</sup> "Had we no orig-

<sup>1</sup> Tytler, *Memoirs of H. H. of Kames*, I, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> P. 231.



inal impressions but those of the external senses, according to the author of the treatise of human nature, we never could have any consciousness of *self*; because such consciousness cannot arise from any external sense. . . . Neither could there be any idea of *personal identity*. For a man, cannot consider himself to be the same person, in different circumstances, when he has no idea or consciousness of *himself* at all." Home then proceeds to show how, according to his theory, the ideas of self and personal identity arise from an internal impression.<sup>1</sup> In 1746, Hume wrote to Home, regarding this essay:<sup>2</sup> "I like exceedingly your method of explaining personal identity, as being more satisfactory than any thing that had ever occurred to me." It might reasonably be supposed, therefore, that when Hume, in 1748, published the Inquiry, he had adopted the position of Home on the questions of self and personal identity—or, at least, had relinquished the doctrines of the Treatise; and it might also be thought that Home's treatment of personal identity, in connection with Hume's recognition in the appendix of the contradiction in his fundamental principles, had played an important part in determining the standpoint and contents of the later work. The argument, however, is not so formidable as it appears to be; moreover, there are some considerations on the other side of the question, which will, perhaps, give occasion to reverse the foregoing conclusion.

Propositions (1), (2), and (3) are statements of fact that are admitted. Proposition (4) is admitted,

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 232, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Tytler, *Memoirs of H. H. of Kames*, I, p. 124.

in the main. Hume's recognition, in the appendix, that he could not explain the fiction of personal identity is a valid reason—although probably not the only one, and perhaps not the chief one,—for the omission, in the Inquiry, of a treatment of the ideas of spiritual substance, self, and personal identity. Debate begins with proposition (5). Regarding this part of the argument it may be remarked, that even if the truth of the conclusion be granted, the validity of the inference is not established. For since Hume still believes that his method of explaining fictions, by means of the imagination, is valid, and satisfactory when applied to the idea of cause and effect—as he certainly does in the Inquiry,—there is no ground to suppose that he would hold the same method to be invalid or unsatisfactory when applied to the ideas of material substance and external existence; the three cases, on his principles, are exactly parallel. But it has already been shown,<sup>1</sup> that the conclusion is not true. For Hume, in the briefer work, looks upon “the vulgar hypothesis,” or the assumption of the existence of an external world, as arising, not from the senses, but from “a natural instinct,” and implies an explanation of it similar to that in the Treatise. Consequently, the argument in the fifth proposition is utterly without foundation. The position adopted in proposition (6) cannot be sustained. It is of course evident that Hume's confession, in the appendix, that he could not explain the fiction of personal identity is not a sufficient reason for assuming that his doctrine of the self was changed, when he wrote the Inquiry; particularly, since it had remained unchanged when the confession

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 211, 212, above.

was made. When Hume acknowledged that his account of personal identity was "a labyrinth" of inaccuracies and inconsistencies, he did not acknowledge that he had changed his doctrine regarding the self. "There is nothing," he says,<sup>1</sup> "I would more willingly lay hold of, than an opportunity of confessing my errors." And what are his errors? "I have not yet been so fortunate," he replies, "as to discover any very considerable mistakes in the reasonings delivered in the preceding volumes, except on one article." That article is "the section concerning personal identity." And with reference to it, he admits only "mistakes in the reasonings," not an error in the doctrine. In fact, he still maintains the same doctrine of the self as he held in the *Treatise*. For he asserts:<sup>2</sup> "When I turn my reflection on myself, I can never perceive this self without some one or more perceptions; nor can I ever perceive anything but the perceptions. It is the composition of these, therefore, which forms the self." Consequently, it may reasonably be concluded that, since Hume's view of the self, when he wrote the appendix, was precisely the same as when he composed the *Treatise*, it had probably undergone no change when he prepared the *Inquiry*. That he should incidentally imply the existence of a real self or personal identity, in the later work, and yet hold the idea of the same to be an illusion, is not any more remarkable than that he should occasionally imply the existence of a real power and necessary connection, and yet explain the ideas of these as actual fictions. Thus much with regard to the main argument.

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 555.<sup>2</sup> I, p. 558.

But there is yet some confirmatory evidence in favor of Brede and Grimm's position. In proposition (7) it is said that Hume often speaks of impressions and ideas being present to the mind, without once saying that the mind or self is a sum of perceptions. In the Inquiry, it is true, there are occasional references to the self; but they are so indefinite, that a satisfactory conclusion cannot be drawn from them either way.<sup>1</sup> Some of these references favor one view, others the other. Thus Hume asserts:<sup>2</sup> "We attribute power to a vast number of objects, . . . to the Supreme Being, . . . to the mind in its command over its ideas and limbs, in common thinking and motion." Here it would seem that the mind is regarded as a real subject having command over its ideas and activities. On the other hand, however, he states:<sup>3</sup> "The authority of the will over its own faculties and ideas is not a whit more comprehensible than the operations of mind on body: So that, upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connection, which is conceivable by us." He also declares<sup>4</sup> that "the mind has never any thing present to it but the perceptions," and further,<sup>5</sup> that the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation "are the only bonds, that unite our thoughts together, and beget that regular train of reflection or discourse, which, in a greater or less degree, takes place among all mankind." This is the same doctrine as that of the Treatise. True, Hume does not attempt to explain how these relations, which are "the only bonds" that unite perceptions, produce a self, or an idea of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 9, 10, 54, 55, 56 n., 57, 60, 61, 76, 124.

<sup>2</sup> P. 56 n.      <sup>3</sup> P. 61.      <sup>4</sup> P. 125.      <sup>5</sup> P. 43; cf. p. 18.



personal identity. Therein lay his difficulty, as he acknowledged, in the appendix. And he seems simply to have claimed "the privilege of a skeptic," on confessing that the difficulty was "too hard" for his understanding.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection a casual reference in the posthumous work, the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, a reference which Hume's critics appear to have overlooked, is worthy of notice. In the discussion on the attributes of God Demea made the reply:<sup>2</sup> "In reality Cleanthes, consider what it is you assert, when you represent the Deity as similar to a human mind and understanding. What is the soul of man? A composition of various faculties, passions, sentiments, ideas; united, indeed, into one self or person, but still distinct from each other. . . . How is this compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity, which all true theists ascribe to the Deity?" Of course, it may be objected that possibly Demea does not here speak for the author. But the weight of evidence is clearly on the other side, since Hume nowhere called in question the validity of Demea's argument. It must be admitted, however, that the preceding reasoning is not quite convincing. From the incidental references in the *Inquiry* and *Dialogues* a probability at most, not a certain conclusion can be reached. And this probability inclines, perhaps, as much to the one side as to the other. For additional evidence, therefore, we turn to the second part of Brede's argument in proposition (7), viz., Hume's claim that the *Inquiry*, rather than the *Treatise*, represents his true position in his maturer years.

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup> II, p. 406.

The advertisement to the posthumous and authoritative edition—1777—of the *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* was for a long time an enigma to the students of Hume's philosophy. It is only within recent years, through the liberality of the Earl of Rosebery, that the secret has been disclosed, by the publication of *Letters of David Hume to William Strahan*, edited by G. B. Hill. The advertisement in the *Essays and Treatises* begins as follows: "Most of the principles, and reasonings, contained in this volume, were published in a work in three volumes, called *A Treatise of Human Nature*: a work which the author had projected before he left college, and which he wrote and published not long after." And it concludes: "Henceforth, the author desires, that the following pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles." Many writers, naturally, have taken this declaration to mean a repudiation of the *Treatise*, and an avowal that the *Inquiry* alone is the true exponent of Hume's philosophical doctrines. Such a supposition, however, is entirely erroneous. In 1740, Hume wrote to Hutcheson, respecting the *Treatise*, as follows:<sup>1</sup> "I wait with some impatience for a second edition, principally on account of some alterations I intend to make in my performance." Hume had not repudiated the *Treatise* then. True, he intended to make some alterations in it. But these were only on account of "negligences" in "the reasoning," or in "the expression," not on account of a change in opinions or principles.<sup>2</sup> In 1742, in a letter to Home, he said:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 117.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 143.

“The *Essays* [Moral and Political] are all sold in London, . . . There is a demand for them; . . . They may prove like dung with marl, and bring forward the rest of my philosophy, which is of a more durable, though of a harder and more stubborn nature.” Hume at this time judged rightly that the *Treatise* was “more durable” and harder than the *Essays*. He had not then repudiated it. In 1751, he wrote Elliot:<sup>1</sup> “I believe the Philosophical Essays [the Inquiry] contain every thing of consequence relating to the understanding, which you would meet with in the *Treatise*; and I give you my advice against reading the latter. By shortening and simplifying the questions, I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo*. The philosophical principles are the same in both; but I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately. . . . I have repented my haste a hundred and a hundred times.” And in a letter, supposed by Burton to have been written late in life, but when, and to whom is not known, he states:<sup>2</sup> “That you may see I would no way scruple of owning my mistakes in argument, I shall acknowledge (what is infinitely more material) a very great mistake in conduct, viz., my publishing at all the ‘*Treatise of Human Nature*,’ a book which pretended to innovate in all the sublimest paths of philosophy, and which I composed before I was five-and-twenty; above all, the positive air which prevails in that book, and which may be imputed to the ardor of youth, so much displeases me, that I have not patience to review it. But what success the same doctrines, better illus-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 98.

trated and expressed, may meet with, *adhuc sub judice lis est.*" Hume has now given up the Treatise, apparently because of "the positive air" which pervades it; but he still maintains its principles and doctrines.

Soon, however, some important events occurred. In 1764 Reid's *Inquiry* appeared, and in 1770 Beattie's *Essay on Truth*. In both these books, Hume's system of philosophy is severely criticised, particularly the principles expounded in the Treatise, since they are the ones more easily assailable. Hume indignantly resented the criticism of Beattie. Formerly he was displeased with "the positive air" of the earlier work; now he appears to be dissatisfied with "the reasoning." Under these circumstances he prepared the now famous advertisement, and sent it to Strahan, in 1775, for insertion in the coming edition. Hence, he complains: "Several writers, who have honored the author's philosophy with answers, have taken care to direct all their batteries against the juvenile work, which the author never acknowledged, and have affected to triumph in any advantages, which, they imagined, they had obtained over it: a practice very contrary to all rules of candor and fair-dealing, and a strong instance of those polemical artifices, which a bigoted zeal thinks itself authorized to employ." At the same time, in his letter to Strahan, Hume expressed the wish that he had prefixed the advertisement to the previous edition—1768,—and remarked:<sup>1</sup> "It is a complete answer to Dr. Reid and to that bigoted silly fellow, Beattie." It is evident, therefore, that when Hume desired the Inquiry to be regarded by the public as alone containing "his philo-

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, pp. 289, 290; cf. p. 303.



sophical sentiments and principles," he made this statement, not because he had given up the philosophical sentiments and principles of the Treatise, but because the position of the later work was less vulnerable than that of the earlier. Even in the advertisement he does not retract any of the doctrines of the Treatise; he merely hopes that "some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression" are corrected. He would undoubtedly still have admitted, as he formerly asserted, that "the philosophical principles are the same in both." But he would not perhaps defend this position; for he was not only at all times averse to controversy, but exceedingly so in his later years. Thus the probability that Hume's view of the self was the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he wrote the Treatise, a probability which resulted from the examination of explicit statements in the appendix and incidental references in the Inquiry and *Dialogues*, is now heightened to practical certainty, by the frank admissions of the author himself.

Finally, Brede rejoins, in proposition (8), that if Hume still held the same view of the self as formerly, it is inexplicable why he did not make use of this doctrine in his argument, in the eleventh section of the later work, against belief in the immortality of the soul. The answer to this part of Brede's reasoning is threefold:—(1) Such an argument Hume probably thought too subtle or abstruse to suit the character of the Inquiry. (2) The argument, in itself, is neither satisfactory nor decisive. As John Stuart Mill remarked:<sup>1</sup> "It is precisely as easy to conceive, that a

<sup>1</sup> *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 211.

succession of feelings, a thread of consciousness, may be prolonged to eternity, as that a spiritual substance for ever continues to exist: and any evidence which would prove the one would prove the other." This much is implied in the Treatise, in the section on "The Immateriality of the Soul." (3) As a matter of fact, Hume employed this argument in the discussion on the attributes of God in his posthumous work, the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. "What is the soul of man"? asked Demea,<sup>1</sup> "A composition of various faculties, passions, sentiments, ideas; united, indeed, into one self or person, but still distinct from each other. . . . How is this compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity, which all true theists ascribe to the Deity?"

If additional proof were required in order to show that Hume's view of the self and personal identity was the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he wrote the Treatise, attention might be called on the one hand, to the close correspondence which exists between the two works in so far as the subjects are treated in both, and on the other, to the fact that the omissions in the Inquiry are easily explained without attributing to Hume any important change of doctrine. But further proof is not necessary. The Inquiry consists essentially of certain portions of the Treatise abbreviated and popularized. And Hume did not intend that it should take the place of the Treatise, any more than did Kant intend that the *Prolegomena* should take the place of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. On the contrary, when he composed the later work he hoped that it would help to bring

<sup>1</sup> II, p. 406; cf. p. 238, above.

forward the earlier, as containing his complete system of philosophy, into public notice. And this, in course of time, it did.

There only remains now for examination Hume's admission when he wrote to Home: "I like exceedingly your method of explaining personal identity, as being more satisfactory than any thing that had ever occurred to me." This statement may have been perfectly true. But even so, that does not necessarily imply that Home's method of explaining personal identity was acceptable to the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Hume confessed, in the appendix, that his own explanation of personal identity was "a labyrinth" of inaccuracies and inconsistencies. He thought Home's explanation better, but he did not say how much better. On the other hand, when it is observed that Home's argument, in the essay on "Personal Identity" is only such a one as Hume professed to have completely refuted in the *Treatise*, and such as is palpably inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the *Inquiry*; when it is remembered that Home was Hume's kinsman and patron who had written him a letter of introduction to Dr. Butler, and who had exerted all his influence, although in vain, to secure for the philosopher a university position; when it is noted that Hume wrote his letter to his patron just before leaving England on a military expedition which was undertaken with a view to improving his financial position; when it is learned that Hume, after his unfortunate experience with the Earl of Annandale—in which affair his "only crime" had been "too little dissimulation, and too strong an indignation at meeting with treach-

ery and perfidiousness'' where not expected,<sup>1</sup>—had become sufficiently a man of the world to be able to appreciate the value and importance of having friends in high places to advance his interests; when, finally, it is borne in mind that Hume was always, not only exceedingly courteous, but also extremely generous, and even magnanimous, toward his philosophical critics and literary contemporaries—toward all except "the bigots,"—it will be quite evident that his concession to Home, concerning the latter's explanation of personal identity, is to be regarded after the manner of a graceful compliment, rather than in the light of a candid acknowledgment.

§ 45. *Conclusion.*—The more important conclusions of the chapter may now be brought together. To Hume's statement: "I never catch myself at any time without a perception," Calderwood retorted that it ought to be enough "if he could catch *himself* with one." But Hume also asserted that he never could observe "any thing but the perception." In the *Treatise* he affirmed:<sup>2</sup> "The true idea of the human mind, is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other." Of course, "produce, destroy, influence, and modify" are not to be understood according to the ordinary signification of the terms; they must be interpreted in the sense of Hume's meaning of power, or cause and effect. As the author stated elsewhere:<sup>3</sup> "No internal impression has an apparent energy, more

<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Letters of David Hume*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> P. 541.

<sup>3</sup> P. 456.



than external objects have." It follows, therefore, that there is no idea of self after the manner ordinarily explained.<sup>1</sup> This idea is a fiction, arising through the influence upon the imagination of a series of resembling perceptions.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the actual identity of self is similar to that of houses, rivers, plants, or animals.<sup>3</sup> And the supposed idea of personal identity is a fiction of the imagination, arising from the influence of the relations of resemblance and causation.<sup>4</sup>

In the appendix,<sup>5</sup> Hume admits that his explanation of personal identity is "very defective." He asserts, however, that it is not in his power to renounce either of the two principles: (1) "All our distinct perceptions are distinct existences"; (2) "the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences." He acknowledges that these two principles are contradictory, but pleads "the privilege of a skeptic," to evade further difficulty.

Although there is no treatment of self or personal identity in the Inquiry, yet from statements in Hume's letters, from incidental references in his later works, and from the fact that he still maintained the two foresaid contradictory principles,<sup>6</sup> the conclusion is inevitable that his doctrine of the self was substantially the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he wrote the Treatise. But since he was never able to reconcile the two contradictory principles, he would manifestly always be unable to give a satisfactory account of personal identity; consequently, this was

<sup>1</sup> P. 533.<sup>2</sup> P. 535.<sup>3</sup> P. 540.<sup>4</sup> P. 541.<sup>5</sup> I, pp. 558, 559.<sup>6</sup> Cf. pp. 53, 145, 152, 153, 206, 210, above.

one of the chief causes why he omitted entirely any further discussion of the subject. Other causes that might be assigned for this omission, no doubt, were the abstract nature of the subject, and the particular circumstances under which the later work was written.

Nowhere, perhaps, is Hume's dependence on eighteenth century modes of thinking more clearly shown than in his conception and treatment of the self. Mathematical and physical ideas still held sway in the speculative thought of the age. Hume is the universal analyzer, who tries to reduce everything to its constituent parts, hoping thereby to be able to explain the significance of the phenomenon under investigation. But just as the biologist, when dissecting an organism, always loses the factor of life, so did Hume when analyzing perceptions, frequently lose the element of meaning. He seemed to possess it when starting out on his research. He has lost it when he reaches the end of his pursuit. And he then knows neither where to look for it, nor how to find it. Hence, he concludes, erroneously, that it was never present. It is extremely interesting to note that, in course of time, Hume came to recognize that his method was not perfectly satisfactory. Had he lived a century later, under the influence of the biological sciences, he would undoubtedly have arrived at a truer view of the self, as an organism which is something over and above the mere elements that enter into its constitution.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MIRACLES, A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE, AND A FUTURE LIFE.

§ 46. *Miracles.*—Hume's doctrines of miracles, a particular Providence, and a future life are practical consequences of his philosophy of human nature, rather than constituent parts of it. Yet the author originally intended to treat these subjects, in part at least, in the earlier work. For certain reasons, however, chiefly politic,<sup>1</sup> he omitted a formal statement, and satisfied himself with incidental references.

According to Hume's principles of unphilosophical probability, the degree of conviction or belief attending a judgment or conclusion is much stronger when the decision is arrived at after examining a few propositions, than when it is reached by means of a long chain of connected reasoning, even granting that each argument, or link in the chain, in either case, has an equal degree of probability.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the evidence for any historical fact will produce the less conviction, other things being equal, the farther back the fact is removed in time. In Craig's<sup>3</sup> argument against "the *Christian Religion*," based upon the nature of historical evidence, each link in the chain of testimony is supposed to amount only to a probability. And Hume admits that, if this assumption be granted,

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> I, pp. 440, 441.

<sup>3</sup> *Theologiæ Christianæ Principia Mathematica.*

“there is no history or tradition, but what must in the end lose all its force and evidence.”<sup>1</sup> He does not, however, concede the validity of Craig’s argument, for two reasons: (1) Historical testimony in some cases amounts to a proof; (2) when the links in the evidence are all of a similar nature, the strength of the conviction does not diminish in proportion to the length of the chain.

It was undoubtedly in connection with this subject, that Hume intended to set forth his own reasoning on miracles. Writing to Campbell, in 1762, he gives an interesting account of the origin of his argument. “I was walking in the cloisters of the Jesuits’ College of La Flèche,” he says,<sup>2</sup> “and engaged in a conversation with a Jesuit of some parts and learning, who was relating to me, and urging some nonsensical miracle performed lately in their convent, when I was tempted to dispute against him; and as my head was full of the topics of my Treatise of Human Nature, which I was at that time composing, this argument immediately occurred to me, and I thought it very much graveled my companion; but at last he observed to me, that it was impossible for that argument to have any solidity, because it operated equally against the Gospel as the Catholic miracles;—which observation I thought proper to admit as a sufficient answer. I believe you will allow, that the freedom at least of this reasoning makes it somewhat extraordinary to have been the produce of a convent of Jesuits, though perhaps you may think the sophistry of it savors plainly of the place of its birth.” Prudential considerations induced the author to omit his “reasoning

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 442.

<sup>2</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 57.



concerning miracles" in the Treatise, being afraid it would give "too much offence," as "the world" was then "disposed."<sup>1</sup>

In the Inquiry, after referring to Tillotson's argument against "the *real presence*," the author flatters himself that he has discovered "an argument" against miracles "of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures."<sup>2</sup> For so long, he presumes, "will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all history, sacred and profane." It should be noted, at the outset, that Hume's argument against miracles is, strictly speaking, not a criticism of their objective possibility, but an examination of their subjective credibility. It is a disquisition on the laws of evidence or principles of human testimony. In order to discuss the subject intelligently, a definition is necessary; two are given.<sup>3</sup> Huxley<sup>4</sup> finds fault with the form of these definitions, but he neglects to notice that, later in the discussion, the author added an explanation of them. This explanation, it is true, appeared at first as a foot-note, and not until the edition of 1770 was it incorporated with the text. Hume regards a miracle as "a violation of the laws of nature";<sup>5</sup> that is, a violation of "the usual course of nature," as that is recognized by scientists.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, the definition is not open to Huxley's criticism.

An opinion prevails generally that Hume claims to

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> P. 93, and n.

<sup>6</sup> P. 93.

<sup>2</sup> P. 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Hume*, pp. 128-130.

<sup>6</sup> P. 105.

demonstrate that no amount of evidence is sufficient to prove a miracle. Such opinion, of course, is a misconception, albeit a misconception which in large measure is excusable, on account of the author's mode of treatment. Hume acknowledges, not only "that there may possibly be miracles," but that there may be miracles which "admit of proof from human testimony."<sup>1</sup> What he denies is, that miracles which are made "the foundation of a [popular] system of religion" are capable of proof.<sup>2</sup> His argument falls into two divisions. The first is, in substance, as follows:<sup>3</sup> A miracle is a violation of the established laws of nature; the laws of nature rest upon "a firm and unalterable experience"; a uniform experience amounts to "a full proof"; consequently there is a full proof against "the existence of any miracle." It may be assumed, however, that in some instances human testimony in support of a miracle amounts to "an entire proof" also. "In that case," says Hume,<sup>4</sup> "there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist. . . . The plain consequence is, . . . 'That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish: And even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.' " Thus far, Hume's argument is essentially sound. True, it is not

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. II, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> P. 105.

<sup>3</sup> P. 93.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 93, 94.

above criticism with reference to form, since it contains an "ambiguous middle." For the "full proof," on which the laws of nature rest, is not the same kind of "full proof" which is capable of being established upon human testimony; that is, "full proof," as indeed the author implies, does not always mean exactly the same thing. But this objection is evaded, consciously or unconsciously, in the statement of the conclusion. Hence the reasoning, thus far, may be regarded as perfectly valid.

The above argument is only the first part of Hume's reasoning. In the second part, he claims to show that he has been "a great deal too liberal" in his concession with respect to the validity of human testimony, and that "there never was a miraculous event" established on such evidence as was equivalent to a full proof.<sup>1</sup> After an examination of the nature of evidence, he thinks, upon the whole, that "no testimony for any kind of miracle [which is to serve as a foundation for a popular system of religion] has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof." And he concludes:<sup>2</sup> "We may establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any [popular] system of religion." This part of the argument is open to criticism. When treating of miracles, two kinds should be distinguished, external, and internal.<sup>3</sup> The former are events in the physical world, and as such are open to the observation of the people present. The latter are experiences in the life of the individual, and hence appear directly only to his own consciousness. Proof of the former de-

<sup>1</sup> P. 94.<sup>2</sup> P. 105.<sup>3</sup> Cf. IV, pp. 89, 108.

depends on external evidence, proof of the latter on internal. Hume's reasoning applies only to external miracles, and to external testimony. Whether or not such testimony has proved the existence of miracles which might serve as "the foundation of a [popular] system of religion" will not be discussed here, since the question lies beyond the scope of this inquiry. It is sufficient to remark, that the second part of Hume's argument is sophistical, and that his final conclusion is vitiated by the "ambiguous middle" already adverted to. The "full proof" arising from human testimony may, at times, be complete and certain; while the "full proof" on which the laws of nature rest is, at most, only a probability, the conclusion from an imperfect induction. Hume still admits, as every thinker must admit, the possibility of miracles.<sup>1</sup> But his conclusion is wider than his premises when he asserts, that no human testimony can prove a miracle, "so as to be the foundation of a [popular] system of religion." Whether or not there have been such miracles in the past is wholly a question of evidence, a question on which there may be honest differences of opinion. And whether or not there will be such miracles in the future cannot be determined by any reasoning whatever.

Near the close of the discussion, Hume made the following singular confession:<sup>2</sup> "I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies of the *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason." The meaning of this avowal is

<sup>1</sup> P. 105.

<sup>2</sup> P. 107.



still a matter of uncertainty. A writer in the *Dublin University Magazine* affirms:<sup>1</sup> "The only thing [in the Essay on Miracles] likely to offend [Dr. Butler] or any right judging person, is the paltry subterfuge with which the essay closes, in which [the author] affects to patronize Christianity. . . . The single excuse for this style was the state of the laws in most countries in Europe, and certainly in Scotland." On the other hand, Grimm<sup>2</sup> thinks that Hume does not attack the Christian miracles. And Calderwood<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that Hume, in his reference to the Christian miracles, is perfectly sincere. The last view is the one most nearly correct; yet it is correct only in part. The distinction drawn above between external, and internal miracles is of service here. It is against the former class only that Hume's argument is directed; to the latter, it has no application. Hume rejects external miracles; he believes in internal miracles. And many of his readers—some less, some more spiritually minded than he—have felt the force, and have been convinced of the essential truth of his conclusion:<sup>4</sup> "The *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

<sup>1</sup> Vol. XXVII, p. 362 n.; cf. Orr, *David Hume*, pp. 198, 216.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisprobleme*, p. 513.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume*, Preface, and p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> P. 108; cf. II, p. 249; IV, p. 135.

§ 47. *A Particular Providence.*—It is often said that Hume's theory of causation overturns the foundation stone of philosophical theism. Undoubtedly, any validity that the cosmological argument might be supposed to have ought to disappear for the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, since he asserts that it is easy "to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle."<sup>1</sup> And yet, it is by no means certain that Hume rejected the common argument for the existence of a first cause, for in the *Dialogues* he made Philo declare:<sup>2</sup> "Nothing exists without a cause; and the original cause of this universe (whatever it be) we call God; and piously ascribe to him every species of perfection. Whoever scruples this fundamental truth, deserves every punishment, which can be inflicted among philosophers, to wit, the greatest ridicule, contempt and disapprobation." But inasmuch as the cosmological argument, irrespective of any criticism of the idea of cause and effect, has ceased to satisfy the philosophical mind, Hume's theory of causation need not necessarily affect his position on the question regarding the existence of a particular Providence. The few casual remarks on this subject, in the *Treatise* and appendix, may be compared with the fuller statement of the *Inquiry*.

In the earlier work Hume asserts:<sup>3</sup> "If every idea be derived from an impression, the idea of a deity proceeds from the same origin; and if no impression, either of sensation or reflection, implies any force or efficacy, it is equally impossible to discover or even

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 381.<sup>2</sup> II, p. 391.<sup>3</sup> P. 454.

imagine any such active principle in the deity." But although he affirms that it is impossible to discover or imagine any active principle in "the deity," he declares that it is "absurd and impious" to exclude this principle from "the supreme being."<sup>1</sup> These references obviously imply the existence of God. It would seem, however, as if the Divine Existence, not being the object of any impression, must remain essentially unknowable.

In the appendix Hume is more explicit. He declares:<sup>2</sup> "The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind; that is, a mind whose will is constantly attended with the obedience of every creature and being. Nothing more is requisite to give a foundation to all the articles of religion, nor is it necessary we should form a distinct idea of the force and energy of the supreme Being." The vague theism foreshadowed in this passage harmonizes with that portrayed in a letter to Muir, a few years later, and very probably is similar to his view at the time he wrote the Treatise. To Muir—about 1744—he wrote:<sup>3</sup> "It must be acknowledged, that nature has given us a strong passion of admiration for whatever is excellent, and of love and gratitude for whatever is benevolent and beneficial; and that the Deity possesses these attributes in the highest perfection: and yet I assert, he is not the natural object of any passion or affection. He is no object either of the senses or imagination, and very little of the understanding, without which it is impossible to excite any affection."

When one turns from this passage to the Inquiry, the story of the ass, as Huxley remarks,<sup>4</sup> that took to

<sup>1</sup> P. 455.

<sup>2</sup> I, p. 456 n.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> *Hume*, p. 144.

the water, when it was laden with salt, suggests itself. Hume's theism "dissolves away in the dialectic river," until little is left but "the verbal sack" in which it was contained. In section xi—entitled "A Particular Providence and a Future State," or as designated in the first edition, "The Practical Consequences of Natural Religion,"—Hume is represented by Epicurus, who makes a harangue to the Athenian people on the subjects of God and immortality. The reasoning concerning a particular Providence is a rejoinder to the argument in Butler's *Analogy*. The deists had claimed that certain doctrines of revealed religion were inconsistent with the attributes of the Supreme Being. Butler showed that the natural religion of deism was open to a similar objection, and drew the conclusion that since this criticism was not valid against natural religion, neither was it effective against revealed religion; that just as there are blemishes in nature so one might expect to find defects in a divine revelation. On the other hand, Hume asserts that the objection holds in both cases. His argument is precisely analogous to that which he had formerly made to the Jesuit priest on the subject of miracles.

The speaker admits the existence of God—a divine existence he had "never questioned"<sup>1</sup>—but asserts that the attributes of God can be inferred only from the course or order of nature. The ontological and cosmological arguments, naturally, have no place; but the teleological argument appeals strongly to Hume's mind,<sup>2</sup> as it did later to Kant's and to John Stuart Mill's. "Allowing, therefore," says Epicurus,<sup>3</sup> "the

<sup>1</sup> P. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. II, pp. 392, 443; IV, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> P. 113.



gods to be the authors of the existence or order of the universe; it follows, that they possess that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in their workmanship." But there appear to be defects in the workmanship, evils and disorders in the world.<sup>1</sup> This, to every apologist, is the appalling crux of the problem. Although Epicurus asserts the existence of God, he denies a particular Providence and "supreme governor of the world, who guides the course of events, and punishes the vicious with infamy and disappointment, and rewards the virtuous with honor and success, in all their undertakings."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he does not neglect to assert: "I deny not the course itself of events, which lies open to every one's inquiry and examination. I acknowledge, that, in the present order of things, virtue is attended with more peace of mind than vice, and meets with a more favorable reception from the world. I am sensible, that, according to the past experience of mankind, friendship is the chief joy of human life, and moderation the only source of tranquility and happiness." It is said, in reply, that from the observation of "a half-finished building," one could infer from the effect, although incomplete, that it was "a work of design."<sup>3</sup> But Epicurus rejoins that the world is a unique effect, and consequently, that only so far as it shows wisdom and goodness, just so far can one ascribe wisdom and goodness to the cause. "A body of ten ounces" raised in a scale may serve as a proof that the counter balancing weight exceeds ten ounces, but not that it exceeds "a hundred." Similarly, the print of a foot on the sand can only

<sup>1</sup> P. 114.<sup>2</sup> P. 115.<sup>3</sup> P. 117.

prove, when considered by itself, "that there was some figure adapted to it, by which it was produced." True, the print of a human foot indicates that it was probably accompanied by another foot, which also left its impress, although effaced by time or accident. But in this process of reasoning one ascends from the effect to the cause, and then descends from the cause to the effect with the help of other experience. Such mode of procedure is not permissible when dealing with a unique effect like the universe.<sup>1</sup> It but aids the assent of reason with "the wings of imagination." Finally, the writer suggests the query, as an objection to the argument of Epicurus, whether it be possible for a cause to be known only by its own particular effect? whether a cause can be of so singular and particular a nature as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object?<sup>2</sup> To this inquiry Epicurus makes no reply. It is evident, therefore, that the last objection is meant to be the author's; and it is probable that, in accordance with his theory of causation, he would answer his final question in the negative. Hume seems to hold a form of theism resembling that adopted later by John Stuart Mill. He affirms the existence of God. He doubts only the nature or attributes of God.<sup>3</sup> He asserts that God is intelligent, but does not say that he is all-wise. It is on the moral side of the question, however, that Hume, like many others, finds the most perplexing difficulty.<sup>4</sup> And here it seems as if reason is for ever fated to put her finger on her lips, and in awe and reverence whisper, "silence." Other minds clearer and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 118, 119.<sup>2</sup> P. 121.<sup>3</sup> Cf. II, p. 391.<sup>4</sup> Cf. II, p. 443.

founder even than Hume's, and other spirits loftier and nobler far than his have met with scarcely any better success than did he, in dealing with this momentous problem.

In the *Natural History of Religion*, and in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, Hume treated at considerable length the more important religious questions. The *Dialogues* is one of the great masterpieces in religious criticism. The author, of whom it has been said with much show of plausibility that he had "neither any twist of vice nor any bias for doing good,"—was well qualified for such a work. No doubt he was fully conscious of his success, and for that reason took special care that it should not be suppressed after his death. Besides, a peculiar personal feeling must have become bound up with a work which needed a quarter of a century for its composition, and which was then retained for another quarter of a century, partly for further improvement, partly because the author desired "to live quietly, and keep remote from all clamor."<sup>1</sup> But although the *Dialogues* presents a vivid picture of Hume's theological difficulties and intellectual strivings, it gives little insight into the real nature of his religious convictions. There is no general agreement as to which speaker represents the writer; not even is there unanimity regarding the position of the several interlocutors,<sup>2</sup>—much less regarding the position of the author.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*; Burton, *Life*, I, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, p. 329; Knight, *Hume*, pp. 209, 213; McCosh, *Agnosticism of H. and Huxley*, pp. 13, 51; Stephen, *History of English Thought*, I, p. 342; Jodl, *Leben u. Phil.*

Several writers think that Cleanthes represents Hume.<sup>1</sup> Many, however, assert that Philo does;<sup>2</sup> some think Cleanthes and Philo;<sup>3</sup> and others all three.<sup>4</sup> The last view, notwithstanding Hume's disclaimer,<sup>5</sup> is undoubtedly the more correct one. For while the author does not fully assent to all that is said by any of the speakers, each of them, in turn, voices his thought and sentiments.

It is Hume's letters and conversation which convey the most valuable information regarding the development and character of his religious opinions. To Elliot, in 1751, he wrote:<sup>6</sup> "You would perceive by the sample I have given you, that I make Cleanthes the hero of the dialogue: whatever you can think of, to strengthen that side of the argument, will be most acceptable to me. Any propensity you imagine I have to the other side, crept in upon me against my will; and it is not long ago that I burned an old manuscript book, written before I was twenty, which contained, page after page, the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head. It began with an anxious search after arguments, to confirm the common opinion; doubts stole in, dissipated, . . . returned again;

*D. H.*, pp. 191, 192, 194; Paulsen, *Dialoge über natürliche Religion und Selbstmord*, p. 16; Windelband, *Gesch. d. n. Phil.*, p. 333; Lechler, *Gesch. d. englischen Deismus*, p. 436.

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 329; Ritchie, *Life of Hume*, p. 43; Stewart, *Works*, I, p. 434 n.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, *Hume*, p. 151; Priestley, *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, p. 127; Orr, *David Hume*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 494.

<sup>4</sup> Knight, *Hume*, p. 209; Porter, *Science and Sentiment*, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> Ritchie, *Life of H.*, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 331, 333.



and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason. . . . I could wish Cleanthes' argument could be so analyzed, as to be rendered quite formal and regular." To Balfour, in 1753, he wrote:<sup>1</sup> "I must only complain of you a little for ascribing to me the sentiments, which I have put in the mouth of the skeptic in the Dialogue. I have surely endeavored to refute the skeptic, with all the force of which I am master, and my refutation must be allowed sincere, because drawn from the capital principles of my system." To Strahan, in 1776, he wrote:<sup>2</sup> "I there [in the *Dialogues*] introduce a skeptic, who is indeed refuted, and at last gives up the argument, nay confesses that he was only amusing himself by all his cavils; yet before he is silenced, he advances several topics, which will give umbrage, and will be deemed very bold and free, as well as much out of the common road." And to John Stewart he wrote:<sup>3</sup> "I am not such a skeptic as you may perhaps imagine." When dining one evening with the French Encyclopaedists, he asserted that he had never seen an atheist.<sup>4</sup> To Mrs. Mallet he denied being a deist.<sup>5</sup> To Ferguson, on a beautiful star-lit night, he exclaimed:<sup>6</sup> "Oh, Adam, can any one contemplate the wonders of that firmament, and not believe that there is a God!" And when weeping over his mother's death, he is said to have replied to Boyle:<sup>7</sup> "Though I threw out my specula-

<sup>1</sup> Ritchie, *Life of H.*, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, p. 454.

<sup>4</sup> *Quarterly Review*, Vol. CII., p. 310.

<sup>5</sup> Hardy, *Memoirs of Charlemont*, I, p. 235.

<sup>6</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, p. 451.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, *Autobiography*, p. 274.

tions to entertain and employ the learned and metaphysical world, yet in other things I do not think so differently from the rest of mankind as you may imagine."

From these citations, it is clear that Hume's doubts on religious questions appeared at a very early age, that he strove earnestly to overcome them, and that he never succeeded. It is probable, therefore, that his position regarding the existence of a particular Providence was the same when he wrote the *Treatise* as when he wrote the *Inquiry*. And it is evident that the vacillation and indefiniteness in his writings on religious subjects are due neither to indecision, nor to caprice, but to many-sidedness. Although he made Cleanthes the hero of the *Dialogues*, he would have assumed the rôle of Philo himself, had Elliot been with him to take the part of Cleanthes.<sup>1</sup> He endeavored to refute the skeptic; but at the same time he advanced several topics which he knew would give "umbrage." Although he declared that the skeptic was refuted and put to silence, yet so strongly did he present the case for Philo, that many of his readers have thought the skeptic had the better of the argument. Thus Huxley asserts:<sup>2</sup> "If Hume really knew of any valid reply to Philo's argument in the following passages of the *Dialogues* [II. pp. 407, 408], he has dealt unfairly by the reader in concealing it." While Hume could exclaim with the Psalmist: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume*, p. 148; cf. Adamson, *Ency. Brit.*, art. *Hume*; Orr, *David Hume*, p. 201; McCosh, *History of Scottish Philosophy*, p. 145; Stephen, *History of English Thought*, I, p. 342, Win-  
delband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 494.

showeth his handiwork''; he could equally confess with the agnostic: "The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery."<sup>1</sup> And it is not at all surprising if the avowed skeptic expressed himself with true reverence and sincerity in the conclusion of the *Dialogues*:<sup>2</sup> "The most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation, that heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate this profound ignorance, by affording some particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our faith."

§48. *A Future Life*.—There remains now but one topic for discussion, the question of a future life. Near the close of the Treatise, there is a section on the "Immateriality of the Soul," a doctrine which Hume declares to be a true atheism, almost the same as the "hideous hypothesis" which had made Spinoza "universally infamous."<sup>3</sup> Hume with his system of impressions and ideas, some of which are extended and some unextended, laid claim to refute both the materialistic and the idealistic theories of the soul. If the soul be extended, he asks, how can it have un-

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> II, p. 467; cf. Knight, *Hume*, p. 220; Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 281, 282; Calderwood, *Hume*, p. 91; *Quarterly Review*, Vol. CIL, p. 311; Falckenberg, *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 230; Windelband, *Gesch. d. n. Phil.*, I, p. 331.—For the contrary view, cf. Pünjer, *Hist. of the Christian Phil. of Religion*, p. 377; Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Phil.*, II, p. 575; *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. XXVII, p. 362 n.; Lange, *Hist. of Materialism*, II, p. 162; Jodl, *Leben u. Phil. D. H.*, p. 86; Orr, *David Hume*, pp. 196, 198.

<sup>3</sup> P. 524.

extended perceptions? and if it be unextended, how can it have extended perceptions? Consequently, "the question concerning the substance of the soul is absolutely unintelligible."<sup>1</sup> He professes, however, that his arguments are not "any ways dangerous to religion," and offers the following "apology" to remove the apprehensions of those who might think they were:<sup>2</sup> "There is no foundation for any conclusion *a priori*, either concerning the operations or duration of any object, of which it is possible for the human mind to form a conception. Any object may be imagined to become entirely inactive, or to be annihilated in a moment; and it is an evident principle, *that whatever we can imagine, is possible*. Now this is no more true of matter, than of spirit; of an extended and compounded substance, than of a simple and unextended. In both cases the metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the soul are equally inconclusive; and in both cases the moral arguments and those derived from the analogy of nature are equally strong and convincing."

The value of this apology, on account of the peculiar circumstances under which it was made, cannot be exactly determined.<sup>3</sup> Hume's critics generally assert that the philosophy of the *Treatise of Human Nature* strikes at the very root of the doctrine of immortality.<sup>4</sup> According to that system, there is no valid idea of

<sup>1</sup> P. 532.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Burton, *Life*, I, pp. 279, 280.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. I, p. 292; Knight, *Hume*, p. 219; McCosh, *Agnosticism of H. and Huxley*, p. 51; Lange, *Hist. of Materialism*, II, p. 162; Pünjer, *Hist. of the Christian Phil. of Rel.*, pp. 377, 378; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren Humes*, p. 48; Tennemann, *Manual of the Hist. of Phil.*, p. 373.



personal identity, and the self is nothing but a bundle or collection of perceptions, which succeed one another without any real connection. Thus, to cite one of Hume's memorable passages:<sup>1</sup> "When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect nonentity." Of course, Hume does not say that perceptions are removed by death. Any one who pleases may assume that they still continue after the dissolution of the body. He merely contends that if the soul ceases to perceive, it ceases to be. And he further contends that his metaphysical reasoning is not prejudicial to the interests of religion, for the moral arguments and those derived from the analogy of nature are strong and convincing in proof of the immortality either of a material, or of an immaterial soul.

In the appendix there is only a passing reference to the subject of a future life, and it is of a similar import to the remarks in the Treatise. "The annihilation," says Hume,<sup>2</sup> "which some people suppose to follow upon death, and which entirely destroys this self, is nothing but an extinction of all particular perceptions; love and hatred, pain and pleasure, thought and sensation. These therefore must be the same with self; since the one cannot survive the other." True, in another passage he declares:<sup>3</sup> "The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind;

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 534.<sup>2</sup> I, p. 559.<sup>3</sup> I, p. 456 n.

that is, a mind whose will is constantly attended with the obedience of every creature and being. Nothing more is requisite to give a foundation to all the articles of religion." Here Hume admits that the doctrine of immortality has a valid foundation, if it be one of "the articles of religion." But it is obvious from some passages in other of his writings, that he does not so regard this doctrine.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion, therefore, seems to be that while the author neither affirms nor denies a personal belief in immortality, he implies that a proof of it from moral arguments, and from those derived from the analogy of nature is possible.

In the Inquiry, Hume was not restrained by a desire to obtain for his philosophy, either the good opinion of Dr. Butler, or the applause of the learned world. Accordingly, he discussed the question of a future life with his usual freedom. In the opening remarks of his address, Epicurus, the author's prolocutor, observes:<sup>2</sup> "We shall not here dispute concerning the origin and government of worlds. We shall only inquire how far such questions concern the public interest. And if I can persuade you, that they are entirely indifferent to the peace of society and security of government, I hope that you will presently send us back to our schools, there to examine, at leisure, the question, the most sublime, but, at the same time, the most speculative of all philosophy." Then, after dealing briefly with the problem of a particular Providence, the speaker asks:<sup>3</sup> "But what must a philosopher think of those vain reasoners, who, instead of regarding the present scene of things as the whole object of their contemplation, so far

<sup>1</sup> Cf. IV, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> P. 111.

<sup>3</sup> P. 116.

reverse the whole course of nature, as to render this life merely a passage to something farther; a porch, which leads to a greater, and vastly different building; a prologue, which serves only to introduce the piece, and give it more grace and propriety? From their own conceit and imagination surely. For if they derived it from the present phenomena, it would never point to any thing farther, but must be exactly adjusted to them." And since the arguments on this subject are to be drawn from experience, or from the phenomena of nature,<sup>1</sup> Hume denies the validity of any pretended proof for the existence of a future life.

It may here, of course, be objected that undue weight is attached to the remarks of Epicurus. It may be said that Epicurus is a historical character, and that the opinions to which he gives utterance are his own, rather than Hume's. The position appears to be well taken. The opinions expressed are, no doubt, those of Epicurus. The question now to be considered is, are they also those of Hume?

Naturally, one turns to the essay on "The Immortality of the Soul" for additional information regarding the author's belief. In this essay, printed in 1755 but withdrawn before publication, Hume does not rest satisfied with attempting to show that the existence of a future life is incapable of proof. He now carries the war into the enemy's country by advancing several arguments against the doctrine of immortality. He not only recedes from his position affirmed in the Treatise, that the moral arguments and those derived from the analogy of nature are strong and convincing, but he undertakes to show that

<sup>1</sup> P. 117.

the arguments drawn from metaphysics, from morals, and from physical science are all futile. Certain phases of the moral argument, in particular, he subjects to severe criticism. "By what rule are punishments and rewards distributed?" asks Hume,<sup>1</sup> "What is the Divine standard of merit and demerit?" And he replies: "Punishment, without any proper end or purpose, is inconsistent with our ideas of goodness and justice; and no end can be served by it after the whole scene is closed. . . .

"Were one to go round the world with an intention of giving a good supper to the righteous and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find, that the merits and demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either. . . .

"The chief source of moral ideas is the reflection on the interests of human society. Ought these interests, so short, so frivolous, to be guarded by punishments, eternal and infinite? The damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil in the universe, than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms."

It may, perhaps, be replied that Hume's strictures, however effective they may be against certain implications of the doctrine of immortality, do not invalidate the counter argument of Butler. Bishop Butler pointed out that rewards and punishments take place in this world, conduct being always followed by its natural consequences. And since a system of rewards and punishments, in the present life, is compatible with the nature of the Infinite Will, it may equally be so in a future life. The pleasures

<sup>1</sup> IV, pp. 402, 403.



and pains experienced here may continue throughout eternity, increasing, diminishing, or changing as they do now. Such reasoning, however, affords but slight consolation. For Hume's pitiless rejoinder would come, even in the words of the inspired writer: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart," or "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are they happy that deal treacherously"?

It should also be observed that Hume's argument against the existence of a future life does not conclusively determine the character of his own belief. For with his peculiar double-sidedness, he immediately gave back with one hand what he took away with the other. Although he maintained that the doctrine of a future life could not be proved by reason, he opened the discussion with the significant remark:<sup>1</sup> "In reality, it is the gospel, and the gospel alone, that has brought life and immortality to light"; and he concluded the essay with the equally impressive statement: "Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to Divine revelation; since we find, that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth."

Before proceeding farther with the discussion, it may be advantageous to take a brief review of Hume's position in his different writings. In the *Treatise*,<sup>2</sup> he asserts that the moral arguments for immortality, and those derived from the analogy of nature are "strong and convincing." In the *Inquiry*,<sup>3</sup> he declares that the existence of a future life cannot be proved—indeed he seems to come very near denying such existence altogether.<sup>4</sup> And in the essay on "The Immor-

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 399.    <sup>2</sup> P. 333.    <sup>3</sup> P. 116.    <sup>4</sup> Pp. 110, 111.

talities of the Soul," he not only contends that the existence of a future life cannot be proved by reason, but also advances many arguments against its actuality; while at the same time, he acknowledges that it is a "great and important truth," discovered by the light of "Divine revelation." The vacillating and conciliatory attitude of the Treatise must be attributed mainly to Hume's "cowardice"—to use his own term,—along with his desire to obtain for his system of philosophy the favorable opinion of Dr. Butler.<sup>1</sup> And the unrestrained mode of expression in the Inquiry is largely explained by his eagerness to produce a murmur among "the zealots."<sup>2</sup> But whether the extreme position of the later work is due, in some measure, to a firmer conviction, as the author grew older, not only that the immortality of the soul is incapable of proof, but also that there is really no future life for the individual, is a question which cannot easily be determined. Nor does the suppressed essay, with its Janus-face, appear, at first sight, to furnish any satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

Following the method taught by Hume, in his reasoning on cause and effect, we find a clue, in substituting for our assigned question, whether the opinions of Epicurus were also those of the author? a related question, viz., was the author sincere when he declared, in the essay, that the doctrine of immortality is a great and important truth, made known by Divine revelation? If Hume was not sincere in this expression, he was probably not sincere in his remarks in the Treatise, and his real view is most nearly expressed in the Inquiry; that is, Epicurus speaks for the au-

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *My Own Life*.

thor, as well as for himself. But on the other hand, if Hume was sincere in the essay, it may fairly be inferred that he was sincere in the Treatise also, and that the account in the Inquiry differs from those in the Treatise and essay, not in being inconsistent—as some critics maintain—but in being indefinite and ambiguous. In that case, Epicurus must be regarded as speaking only for himself, not for the author. In support of each of these alternatives a few arguments may be adduced. With an examination of the evidence on both sides of the question, our assigned task will be concluded.

I. In favor of the former supposition, viz., that Hume was not quite sincere in his reference to the doctrine of immortality as a “great and important truth” of revelation, may be stated three considerations:

1. Hume openly professed that he did not believe in the doctrine of a future life. To Hardy he said:<sup>1</sup> “Why troth, man, it is so pretty and so comfortable a theory, that I wish I could be convinced of its truth, but I canna help doubting.” Now if a person publicly rejects one of the fundamental tenets of a popular or dominant religion, it will generally be found that his skepticism extends even farther than his profession. For considerations of self-interest and feelings of sympathy naturally attach him to the same religious views as those of his friends and neighbors. There are exceptions, of course, to the general rule. And Hume, it must be admitted, may have come under the exception. Many circumstances lend support to such an opinion. He had no close family ties; he

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Earl of Charlemont*, I, p. 233.

had no high or generous enthusiasms; he cherished a strong feeling of independence, possessed an indomitable spirit of self-reliance, and took pride in being thought a skeptic. Hence the argument based on his outward profession is not conclusive.

2. From the accounts of Hume's death it seems that, in his last days, he had no expectation that after his decease he would live again. McCosh<sup>1</sup> narrates a story—though he questions the truth of it—told by a person who professed to have attended the philosopher on his death-bed, and according to which, the patient experienced, at times, the most “unutterable gloom.” But the statement is unworthy of the slightest credence. Hume's correspondence with Strahan, during the latter part of his illness is exceedingly interesting and significant. On June 12, 1776, writing with regard to the publication of the *Dialogues*, he said:<sup>2</sup> “It is an idle thing in us to be concerned about any thing that shall happen after our death; yet this is natural to all men, and I often regretted that a piece, for which I had a particular partiality, should run any hazard by being suppressed after my decease.” He still continued making corrections for the coming edition of his works. On July 27, he sent three pages for his history, remarking: “You will wonder, that, in my present situation I employ myself with such trifles, and you may compare me to the modern Greeks, who, while Constantinople was besieged by the Turks and they themselves were threatened with total destruction, occupied themselves entirely in disputes concerning the procession of the holy Ghost. Such is the

<sup>1</sup> *History of Scottish Philosophy*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 337.



effect of long habit." Strahan replied on August 1:<sup>1</sup> "This will be a very correct edition, and I will take care it shall be printed accurately and neatly; . . . By the by, does not this almost universal solicitude to live after we close our eyes to this present scene, mean something? I hope, I almost believe it does." On July 30, Hume sent a further correction. On August 12, he sent another, and bade farewell to his publisher. "This, Dear Sir," he said, "is the last correction I shall probably trouble you with: for Dr. Black has promised me, that all shall be over with me in a very little time: This promise he makes by his power of prediction, not that of prescription. And indeed I consider it as good news: For of late, within these few weeks, my infirmities have so multiplied, that life has become rather a burthen to me. Adieu, then, my good and old Friend. David Hume." Yet another correction, the last, was added in a post-script. Strahan replied on August 19, and asked the following peculiar question:<sup>2</sup> "Only permit me to ask you a question or two, to which I am prompted, you will believe me, not from a foolish or fruitless curiosity, but from an earnest desire to learn the sentiments of a man, who has spent a long life in philosophical inquiries, and who, upon the extreme verge of it, seems, even in that awful and critical period, to possess all the powers of his mind in their full vigor, and in unabated tranquility.

"I am more particularly led to give you this trouble, from a passage in one of your late letters, wherein you say, *It is an idle thing in us to be concerned about any thing that shall happen after our death; yet this,*

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 340. <sup>2</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, p. 512.

you added, *is natural to all men*. Now I would eagerly ask, if it is *natural to all men*, to be interested in futurity, does not this strongly indicate that our existence will be protracted after this life?

“Do you *now* believe, or suspect, that all the powers and faculties of your own mind, which you have cultivated with so much care and success, will cease and be extinguished with your vital breath?

“Our soul, or immortal part of us, some say, is able, when on the brink of dissolution, to take a glimpse of futurity; and for that reason I earnestly wish to have your last thoughts on this important subject.” Hume received the letter a day or two before his death, but did not answer it. Soon after, his brother replied:<sup>1</sup> “Though he possessed his faculties, and understanding and cool head, to the last, he was scarce in condition to answer [your letter], nor the question you put to him: but so far as I can judge, his sentiments with regard to futurity were the same, as when he was in perfect health and was never more at ease in his mind, at any period of his life.” Thus with the public protestations of the philosopher while in health, fully accords his conduct on the approach of death.

3. Furthermore, it may be added that Hume was not one of those who think that absolute sincerity on all occasions is expedient or desirable. In the beginning of his practical life—when residing with the Marquis of Annandale,—after experiencing some painful and disadvantageous consequences of his acting honestly and disinterestedly, he wrote:<sup>2</sup> “My only crime has been too little dissimulation, and too great

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *Letters of D. H.*, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *Letters of D. H.*, and *extracts, etc.*, pp. 52, 53.

an indignation at meeting with treachery and perfidiousness, where I did not expect it. . . . My connection with the family will be very short, and give me occasion all my life to reflect on the mischiefs arising from too great trust and confidence." After taking part in a military campaign, mingling in state diplomacy, and acquiring the art of making one's way in the world, he wrote:<sup>1</sup> "It is putting too great a respect on the vulgar, and on their superstitions, to pique one's self on sincerity with regard to them," and added that, without a little "innocent dissimulation, or rather simulation," it is impossible "to pass through the world." This argument, it is true, will work either way. While it implies that Hume was not actuated always by motives of the strictest integrity or singleness of purpose, it does not indicate whether his evident insincerity, in the present instance, was manifested in his writings, or in his conversation; whether in his professed acceptance, in the essay, of the doctrine of immortality as a truth of revelation, or in his pretended rejection of it, in his daily life, as a speculative dogma without influence on conduct. Yet when this argument is taken in connection with the preceding ones, the inference seems inevitable, that Hume was not perfectly sincere in his reference to immortality as an important truth, discovered by the light of Divine revelation.

II. Before giving final assent, however, to the conclusion just arrived at, it may be deemed requisite to examine also the arguments in favor of the latter alternative, viz., that Hume was sincere in his reference, in the essay, to the doctrine of immortality as a

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, II, pp. 187, 188.

divinely revealed truth. Two reflections suggest themselves:

1. There is nothing inherently inconsistent in the belief that the existence of a future life cannot be proved by reason, but is a revelation from Heaven, a true and precious message from the heart of Nature to her children. On the contrary, many eminent thinkers before Hume's time held this view, as indeed many have held it since.

2. In support of the theoretical position just indicated, there are some practical considerations: Hume encouraged his servants to attend a place of worship; he went to church regularly himself, and took part in the counsels of the established church of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The historian doubtless realized that the doctrine of immortality had exercised a marvellous influence on the progress and civilization of the western world. The philosopher must at times have recognized that belief in a future state is the source of unspeakable comfort and ennobling encouragement to multitudes of sorrowing and weary travellers oppressed by life's troubled pilgrimage. And although the psychologist clearly perceived that this belief is not always productive of pleasure, nor of the most beneficial results, yet he understood well that the threatened punishments of the nether-world are, in general, not realized very keenly. In the *Treatise*,<sup>2</sup> the author naïvely observed that "in matters of religion men take a pleasure in being terrified," and that "no preachers are so popular, as those who excite the most

<sup>1</sup> McCosh, *History of Scottish Philosophy*, p. 155; Burton, *Life*, II, p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> P. 414.



dismal and gloomy passions." With such thoughts as the foregoing flashing, at least fitfully, across a receptive and many-sided consciousness, the subtle, sympathetic mind of Hume may have been moved with reverence to exclaim:<sup>1</sup> "Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to Divine revelation; since we find, that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth."

Notwithstanding the justness of the foregoing reflections, there are serious objections to the validity of the conclusion—if that conclusion attribute to Hume anything more than a passing though pious sentiment, when he eloquently referred to the doctrine of immortality as a truth of Divine revelation. There is a passage in the Inquiry of more than usual significance, which calls first for consideration. Epicurus insists that he does not undermine "the foundations of society," nor loosen "the ties of morality," when, in his "philosophical disquisitions," he denies the existence of a future state. And the Athenian people reply: Even should it be conceded that the doctrine of immortality is wholly a speculative principle, and consequently should have no influence on practical life, yet in reality it has a very decided sway over the character and conduct of mankind.<sup>2</sup> Hume is here giving an account of the actual facts of human experience, as he had observed them in everyday life. In the eighteenth century, philosophers and scientists had advocated perfect liberty of thought for the sake of individual well-being and the advancement of truth; while princes and priests had fostered a belief

<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> IV, pp. 110, 111.

in the immortality of the soul for the welfare of the state and the prosperity of the church. Hume, as a member of the former class, acknowledged that the common man, or the man of emotional temperament may be powerfully influenced in his conduct by the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and that the highly speculative mind, or the man of abstract thought is but little affected in his daily work by the common beliefs of a hereafter. Moreover, Hume also knew that although the politicians, as well as the philosophers, had much reason on their side, yet neither party had all. For man, whether ignorant or learned, is a social being, and not a logical machine. As a social being, he is a creature of habit. And in many instances, when character is once formed, philosophical theories and religious beliefs—though they may have played a large part in molding the character—have exceedingly little influence on conduct. It is then of infinitely more moment what kind of person one is, than what sort of beliefs one has. For Hume, as for Epicurus or the philosophic sage, the doctrine of immortality was of extremely little consequence. The natural impulses of sympathy and benevolence, of self-love and self-respect were the great motive forces that dominated his life, that made him in the true sense of the word a good citizen, and in the ordinary acceptation of the term an honorable man.

Furthermore, we incline to the view that, apart from revelation, the strongest ground for belief in a future life is the desire of the fond parent to meet again a departed child, or of the disconsolate spouse or lover, for a glad reunion in the spirit-land, where there will be no more separations and no more sorrow.

Hume belonged to neither of these two classes of people. He once congratulated himself on the fact that, as a number of small fevers are said to prevent a great one, so in like manner, since he entertained a sentiment of regard for all the members of the fair sex, he was not in danger of becoming enamoured of any one. With open heart and with characteristic freedom, the philosopher dissipated his affection on humanity; while with masterly hand and national genius, the man of affairs centred his care on self. Hume early knew that he had drawn a lucky lot from the lap of Lachesis, and the vast resources of his marvellous mind he diligently employed to make his path in life prosperous and pleasant. After a few slight mishaps in fitting out his craft, he sailed successfully on the bright waters of an ever-flowing tide, rarely rising high on mountain crests, nor ever sinking low in abysmal hollows. Favored with sunny sky and enlivening breeze he kept far from shoals, and free from breakers.

Finally, when putting in to port, he remarked, in the Autobiography, "that a man of sixty-five, by dying," cut off only "a few years of infirmities." He had had a good day, and was then "detached from life." Although he had seen his own good ship glide over the waves of time in a silvery track, he had observed many others, no less worthy than his, buffeted by the storms of adversity, or broken on the rocks of misfortune, or perchance engulfed in the ocean of eternity, ere the hopes, the aspirations, and the enthusiasms of the mariner had been fairly kindled. And he may very reasonably have had no desire to venture on another voyage upon an unknown

sea, when, judging of the future from the past, in accordance with the principles of his own philosophy, he had no rational ground to expect that the new scene of things would be much better than the old.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONCLUSION.

§ 49. *Summary.*—The relations which obtain, either in the way of agreement or of difference, between the Treatise and Inquiry, may now be summarized. There is not any subject whatever on which there is perfect agreement. In the Inquiry, there are omissions, or additions, or there is a modification of doctrine, or a difference in method, in the treatment of every topic. Leaving out of consideration those slight variations that are of no significance, it may be said that the position of both works is identical on the following points: intrinsic or primary aim, cause of perceptions, association of ideas, abstract or general ideas, cause and effect, philosophical probability, liberty and necessity, and the reason of animals. The position of both works is practically the same on the following points: subject-matter, method, nature and classification of perceptions, mathematics, belief, material substance, and external existence. Agreement is implied, although not formally expressed, on the following points: the ideas of space and time, intuitive knowledge, the distinction between natural and philosophical relations, between impressions of sensation and reflection, and between the ideas of memory and imagination. On the subjects of unphilosophical probability, self, and spiritual substance, it may be inferred, from the general tenor of the treatment of related questions, from incidental references in other writings, and from statements in letters, that Hume's

view was the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he composed the Treatise. From his remarks on personal identity, in the appendix, it would seem that his view on that question underwent a change. The extent of this change, however, it is impossible to ascertain.

The chief differences in the Inquiry are omissions and additions. The omissions are of two kinds: (1) Complete, for example, the treatment of philosophical relations, intuitive knowledge, unphilosophical probability, and the ideas of spiritual substance, self, and personal identity. (2) Partial, for instance, the treatment of impressions of reflection, ideas of memory, general or abstract ideas, ideas of space and time, mathematics, philosophical probability, general rules, material substance, and external existence. The additions are: (1) Some practical application of Hume's theoretical principles, for example, the treatment of miracles, a particular Providence, and a future state; (2) the transference of the discussion on liberty and necessity from Book II of the *Treatise of Human Nature* to the Inquiry; (3) the fuller development of the argument on the idea of necessary connection; (4) a more accurate account of belief; and (5) a fuller or more explicit recognition of the function of instinct. Besides these differences, it may be noted that Hume's extrinsic or secondary aims are not the same as formerly, and that the division of "the objects of human reason" into relations of ideas and matters of fact is substituted for the classification of complex ideas and the sub-division of philosophical relations.

The reasons for the omissions are: (1) The author's

desire to present the more important and interesting parts of his philosophy briefly, clearly, and in a popular manner. (2) The inherent difficulties in some of the subjects themselves. (3) The discovery that the principle of connection among ideas, in the attempted explanation of the fiction of personal identity, was "very defective." The reasons for the additions are: (1) Hume's desire to call attention to the significance of the philosophical principles of the Treatise; (2) his desire for fame and notoriety; (3) his comparative indifference to the reception which the Inquiry would receive from certain classes of people, the favorable opinion of whom he had wished to obtain for the Treatise; (4) his desire to answer objections that seem to have been provoked by the mode of treatment in the earlier work; and (5) his clearer psychological insight regarding the nature of belief and the function of instinct, when he wrote the Inquiry.

§ 50. *Hume's System of Philosophy*.—It may yet be asked, What is Hume's philosophical position? Is his system to be classified as idealism, realism, materialism, positivism, or skepticism? Statements may be discovered in his writings in favor of every one of these philosophical theories. The most obvious explanation of this apparent inconsistency is the many-sidedness and liberal-mindedness of the man. Knight, when speaking of the difficulty of determining Hume's place in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, discerningly remarked:<sup>1</sup> "It must not be forgotten, . . . that he had a certain amount of sympathy with all the characters; and that each of them (Demea

<sup>1</sup> *Hume*, p. 209.

included) alternately mirrored his own ever-changing mood. This kaleidoscopic character of Hume's mind has not been sufficiently recognized." Only an interpretation like this can render intelligible the subtle turns of thought, the rapid changes in point of view, and the unexpectedly inconsistent expressions that are frequently met with in his philosophical writings. The true position of our author will best be indicated by reference to the more important subjects which he treats, viz., epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion.

I. Epistemology. On the question of epistemology, Hume may be said to be a positivist, at least after his own fashion. His subject-matter is impressions and ideas; his method, observation and experiment. The chief problems of epistemology are: (1) The origin of knowledge; and (2) the nature or validity of knowledge. On the first question, Hume is a thoroughgoing empiricist. In both the *Treatise* and *Inquiry*, he regards all knowledge as having its origin in impressions of sensation. On the second question, viz., the validity of knowledge, our author is not so positive. There is no doubt, of course, that the doctrine of both works is essentially idealistic and phenomenalist. But in systems of phenomenism, this part of the theory of knowledge is a variable factor. In order to represent accurately Hume's view on the question of the validity of knowledge, it is necessary to take account of his threefold treatment of certainty, or the three stages in his exposition, which we have called the epistemological, the logical, and the psychological.

1. The Epistemological Exposition. According to



the account in the Treatise, all knowledge or reasoning consists of relations,—relations among impressions and ideas. Of relations there are two classes, those that always remain the same so long as the impressions and ideas upon which they are based remain the same, and those that may change without any change in the impressions or ideas. The former class fall within the sphere of intuition and demonstration. They are objects of knowledge, as distinguished from probability. They are practically exact and certain, and constitute “the foundation of science.” Among the demonstrative relations, however, there is one sort—the science of geometry—which form an exception to the general rule, in that they are not exact, because they are based on the images of sense and imagination, that is, on a standard which is not precisely true. The other class of relations constitute what is called probable knowledge, or more strictly speaking, proofs and probabilities. All reasoning concerning proofs is based upon the relation of cause and effect, and consequently, cannot be more certain than the foundation on which it rests. Proofs and probabilities differ only in degree, the former being founded on the more permanent principles of the imagination, the latter on the less permanent.

2. The Logical Exposition. In Part IV, Hume subjects “the faculty, which judges,” as well as the content about which the judgment is made to a relentless criticism. The result of this criticism is twofold: (1) Knowledge, properly so called, “degenerates into probability”; (2) all probabilities, that is, knowledge, proofs, and probability, are resolved into “a total extinction of belief and evidence.” But this extreme

skepticism does not represent the true position of the author. It represents the position which would logically result, according to the principles of the philosophy of human nature, if belief were, as many suppose, an act of the understanding.

3. The Psychological Exposition. Belief, Hume holds, is not an act of the understanding, but a feeling, an instinct, or a product of the imagination. Thus nature, by means of certain qualities of the imagination, prevents utter skepticism, and determines one with a sort of necessity to view certain objects in a particular manner, and to believe just as well as to breathe or feel. Hence, there exists a conflict between the principles of the imagination, and the principles of the understanding or reason—although the latter are but “the more established properties” of the former. And not only does this conflict exist between the imagination and reason, but each of these classes of principles, if followed exclusively, leads to contradiction or absurdity. Reason, when it acts alone, entirely subverts itself; and the imagination alone runs into all sorts of absurdities and error. Thus there is “no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all.” And Hume admits that he knows not what then “ought to be done.” He only knows what generally is done, viz., that “this difficulty is seldom or never thought of.” In other words, the result of logical reflection is utter skepticism. But nature demands action, and action is the radical cure for skepticism. Hume’s theory of knowledge, therefore, is theoretically and logically, complete skepticism; but practically and actually, it is a system of idealistic positivism. And the peculiar char-

acteristic of this positivism is that while it cannot be rationally justified, yet it has sufficient authority and validity to serve all the purposes of life.<sup>1</sup>

In Books II and III of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, the two classes of knowledge which are called relations of ideas and matters of fact were gradually substituted for the two classes of philosophical relations, which were dealt with in Book I. Consequently, in the Inquiry all objects of human reason fall into these two classes, relations of ideas, and matters of fact. Relations of ideas possess intuitive or demonstrative certainty, and thus constitute knowledge strictly so called. Reasoning concerning matters of fact is based upon the relation of cause and effect, as in the *Treatise*, and thus possesses only probable certainty. But this probable certainty is again of two kinds, proofs, and probabilities in a narrower sense. All relations of ideas are sometimes spoken of as possessing exactness and certainty. Geometry, indeed, as ordinarily treated, contains many contradictions and absurdities; but Hume thinks that these may be removed by adopting his theory of general ideas. The manner in which this is to be done, however, he does not attempt to show; nor is it to be neglected that he regards the fundamental ideas of geometry as being derived from the senses, and as being based on the general appearances of objects to the senses or imagination.

Relations of ideas and matters of fact are subjected, in section xii, to a criticism somewhat similar to that made in Part IV of the *Treatise*. Hume professes to

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* Butler, *Analogy*, p. 3.—“But to us, probability is the very guide of life.”

point out that there are contradictions and absurdities in the relations of ideas, as these subjects are commonly dealt with by philosophers, and states that reason is so dazzled and confounded by these difficulties that "she scarcely can pronounce with certainty and assurance concerning any one object." And with regard to matters of fact, he maintains that there is a contradiction between the senses, instinct, or imagination, on the one hand, and the reason or understanding, on the other. Hume thinks that most of the contradictions among relations of ideas may be removed by adopting his view of general ideas. And he affirms that the great subverter of Pyrrhonism or excessive skepticism is action, employment, "and the occupations of common life." He asserts that his skeptical objections might be displayed at greater length, "if any durable good or benefit to society could ever be expected to result from them." For a similar reason he suppressed the essays on "Suicide" and the "Immortality of the Soul."

It does not seem that there is any essential difference of standpoint, or of doctrine in the Inquiry and Treatise, on the two general questions of epistemology. Differences of treatment, of course, are prominent; but most of these are easily explained. With regard to the topic of geometry, it is true, an apparent difference of doctrine may be observed. And yet, even on this question, the position of the later work is practically the same as that of the earlier. The subject is not dealt with in detail. This was done in the dissertation on "The Metaphysical Principles of Geometry," which Hume sent to Millar for publication in 1755, but withdrew on account of some defect



either "in the argument or in its perspicuity." Consequently, the significance of the alterations in the form of statement, in the Inquiry, cannot be exactly determined. Also in the exposition of belief, although the doctrine remains in principle the same, there is a more explicit recognition of the emotional elements, and of the different types of belief, than in the earlier work. Finally, the faculty of imagination receives less consideration than formerly. In the Treatise, Hume maintained that the memory, senses, and understanding are "all of them founded on the imagination." Yet he asserted that this principle is "inconstant," and that men of bright fancies are like those angels, "whom the scripture represents as covering their eyes with their wings." Like the sage of Chelsea, the philosopher of Ninewells clearly saw that by the imagination people everywhere are most easily "governed and beguiled." In the Inquiry, the sphere of action for this faculty, on account of omissions, is considerably restricted, and a portion of its authority is shared in common with instinct. One might suppose, therefore, that this modification in treatment ensued naturally, as Hume grew older. The change is an interesting fact, but whether it has any significance, aside from that, seems to be beyond the power of determination.

Our author, like other great thinkers, lived before his time. He was a man of the nineteenth century, rather than of the eighteenth. In the departments of political science, economics, philosophy, religion, and especially psychology, he was a pioneer. As a modern psychologist, he placed himself squarely on the broad ground of experience. As a keen observer, he recog-

nized the facts. And as an impartial investigator, he accepted them all. The problem of knowledge, however, was too difficult for satisfactory treatment by means of the mechanism furnished him by the eighteenth century. In the course of the development of his doctrine, perplexities, absurdities, and contradictions arose. He pointed these out freely. And he acknowledged that he could not solve them. But he did not, on that account, proclaim that consciousness is fallacious, or that like Satan, it is "a liar from the beginning." Hamilton's celebrated dictum, "*falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*," had rightly no place in his philosophy. He merely recognized that consciousness, indeed like most people in the world, does not tell the truth, on all occasions. His successors, however, instead of giving their attention to the improvement of the science of man, with the help of better apparatus, seized the materials he left and used them as infernal machines, with which they sought to destroy the foundation he endeavored to construct. It is said that the politicians of some countries, when compelled by the pressure of public opinion to carry out any important reform, try all the possible wrong ways of doing the thing, before adopting the right one. In like manner, the philosophers seemed long intent upon trying all other possible theories, before going back to Hume.

II. Metaphysics. Metaphysics has been employed in several different senses, for example, the science of being, the science of first principles, a systematic exposition of *a priori* judgments, etc., or as Hume sometimes used the term, any abstruse or profound reasonings. As now generally understood, metaphys-

ics investigates two problems, one ontological, the other cosmological, viz., What is the ultimate nature of reality? and what is the form of reality, or the nature of the connection which exists between the totality of things? On both these questions Hume, in the *Treatise*, is not merely a skeptic, but also a dogmatist. The possibility of a metaphysics is excluded on his theory of knowledge. All knowledge arises from experience. Experience means ultimately sense experience, and one-sided at that. Consequently, the ideas of necessary connection, material substance, spiritual substance, self, and personal identity, in short, all primary metaphysical ideas are fictitious and invalid. And in every case, a professed explanation is given of how the fiction arises, through the influence of imagination and custom. This latter element, the derivation of fictitious metaphysical ideas, is Hume's most important, as well as his most distinctive positive contribution to philosophy.

In the *Inquiry*, Hume's position on the question of metaphysics is logically, although not actually the same as that in the *Treatise*. The subject-matter and method are similar. All knowledge arises from experience. Experience is equivalent to sense experience. And the author draws the conclusion, in a general way, that a metaphysics is impossible. He does not, however, treat the several problems of metaphysics after the same manner as in the earlier work. He takes up one question, that of causal connection, deals with it as he did in the *Treatise*, and arrives at the same conclusion with reference to it. The idea of necessary causal connection is a fiction, arising through the influence of imagination and custom.

Now the question arises, What is Hume's position, in the Inquiry, on the other metaphysical questions, viz., material substance, spiritual substance, self, and personal identity? Three different answers are possible. In the first place, it may be said that, in the appendix, he acknowledged that the principle of connection among ideas, when employed to explain personal identity, was very defective, and that he knew neither how to correct that account nor how to render it consistent. Hence, it may be thought that this confession is the key to the Inquiry, that it explains why a treatment of personal identity, self, and substance is omitted in the later work. The author's view, on these questions, underwent a fundamental change; and therefore, the position of the Inquiry is radically different from that of the Treatise.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it may be said that since the fundamental principles are the same in both works, Hume thought it was not necessary to show a second time the application of these principles to all metaphysical questions in detail. He shows, in an exhaustive manner, the application of his principles to one of these questions, viz., necessary connection, with a result identical to that in the Treatise. He implies that they hold, in a similar way, when applied to the others. Consequently, the omissions in the later work are merely for the sake of brevity and popular treatment, and the position of both works is exactly the same.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, there is an intermediate view, one that seems to be nearer the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Grimm, *Zur Gesch. d. Erkenntnisproblems*, pp. 580, 583; Brede, *Der Unterschied d. Lehren H.*, pp. 47, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Green, "Introduction to Hume"; Orr, *David Hume*, p. 45.



truth than either of the preceding. The fundamental principles, as Hume himself said, are identical in both works; therefore, the same conclusions as in the Treatise logically follow in the Inquiry. But the author recognized a difficulty in the appendix, and this difficulty is a standing one. It applies, however, only to the ideas of spiritual substance, self, and personal identity. The principle of customary conjunction among ideas is as adequate to explain the fictitious idea of material substance, and the hypothesis of external existence as to explain the fiction of necessary connection. Hence, on these questions, Hume's view was exactly the same when he wrote the Inquiry as when he wrote the Treatise. Over and above the many references, in the later work, in favor of this conclusion, convincing proof is easily accessible in his letters and essays. Writing to Home in 1746, he said:<sup>1</sup> "As to the idea of substance, I must own, that as it has no access to the mind by any of our senses or feelings, it has always appeared to me to be nothing but an imaginary centre of union amongst the different and variable qualities that are to be found in every piece of matter." Hume's principles of association, however, are not adequate to explain the fictitious ideas of self and personal Identity. Hence, on these subjects, the standpoint of the two works is obviously somewhat different. Here is a real cause for the omission, in the Inquiry, of a treatment of these problems. But it is not a sufficient reason for asserting that our author's view, on any of these questions, is changed. It is highly probable, nay it is practically certain that his doctrines of spiritual sub-

<sup>1</sup> Tytler, *Memoir of Henry Home of Kames*, II, p. 124.

stance, self, and personal identity were the same when he wrote the *Inquiry* as when he wrote the *Treatise*. Consequently, while the position of both works, on the chief problems of metaphysics, is not formally identical, yet essentially it is. The rejection of metaphysics, although not so thorough, is just as real in the *Inquiry* as in the *Treatise*.

III. Philosophy of Religion. Although questions in philosophy of religion are treated in the *Inquiry*, in the *Natural History of Religion*, in the *Dialogues*, and in the essay on "The Immortality of the Soul," only three problems are discussed in the *Inquiry*, or referred to in the *Treatise*, viz., a particular Providence, miracles, and a future life. A word on each.

1. The Existence of God. Hume was never an atheist, and he objected to being called a deist. He undoubtedly regarded himself as a theist. His theism, however, was of a decidedly liberal character, a judicious blending of positive and negative elements. He believed in God as the author or ground of the world, all-powerful, and possibly all-wise, but apparently indifferent to the individual wants of his creatures, and not the object of any affection.

2. Miracles. Hume defined miracles as events contrary to the established laws of nature, and implied a distinction between external miracles, and internal. External miracles he did not admit to have taken place in the past, but he conceded the possibility of their taking place in the future—although not as the basis of any popular system of religion. Internal miracles he asserted not only have occurred, but are occurring daily. His views on miracles and a particular Providence, when he wrote both works, were the same.

3. A Future Life. On the question of the immortality of the soul, Hume's position, in the *Treatise*, seems to be positive; in the *Inquiry*, on the other hand, it is negative. The change of statement, on this question, was due to the author's desire to obtain for the earlier work the favorable opinion of the learned world, or to his own conviction, as he grew older, that there was no valid ground—except possibly revelation—for belief in a future life, or most probably, to both these causes. Had Hume lived in the nineteenth century instead of the eighteenth, he would have accounted himself, like Huxley and Spencer, an agnostic on matters of religion.

IV. Conclusion. If Hume is to be placed in some category—and as Hunt, with much truth, observed, no mind more than his “would have rebelled against being classed and labelled,”—it may be said that, with regard to epistemology, he is a positivist; with regard to metaphysics, he is a skeptic; and with regard to religion, he is an agnostic.

On these three subjects—epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion,—the position of the *Inquiry* is practically identical with that of the *Treatise*. True, if the later book be taken by itself, and read independently of the earlier, because of omissions, it appears to be much the more positive. The *Inquiry* alone, however, not only gives a very inadequate conception of the philosophy of human nature, but also an essentially false one. Thus Kant, who was acquainted only with the later work,<sup>1</sup> was entirely mistaken regarding the author's position on certain important epistemological questions. But the *Inquiry*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Adamson, *The Philosophy of Kant*, p. 202 n. 35.

is the book which is by far the better known. Moreover, it is the one which is generally regarded as containing the corrected, maturer, and truer statement of the principles of the science of man. It is undoubtedly largely due to these circumstances that the treatment of Hume in nearly all the histories of philosophy is inadequate and defective. Hume's peculiar significance for the history of philosophy lies wholly and solely in the *Treatise*. In the preceding chapters of this monograph, we have endeavored to show that the *Inquiry*, when interpreted in the light of the *Treatise*, is essentially identical, both in point of view and in doctrine, with the earlier work. And that it should be so interpreted, we have also endeavored to make manifest. The author more than once asserted that the philosophical principles, in both books, were the same. For some years after the publication of the *Treatise* he looked forward to a second edition. In 1742, when his political essays were in great demand, he said that the *Treatise of Human Nature* was of "a more durable, though of a harder and more stubborn nature" than the essays. He did not repudiate the *Treatise* until it had been attacked by Reid and Beattie. He was then an old man, too indolent, or too indifferent, or too busy with practical affairs to defend it. Hence, he acknowledged that it was defective; but yet the imperfections lay in the form, not in the doctrine.

Hume's philosophical principles remained ever the same. But his system, begun with the most extravagant expectations, was concluded in the most extreme disappointment. The philosophy of human nature was declared to be "the only solid foundation" of the



sciences, their "capital or center." But the Treatise "fell *dead-born from the press*." The collapse, however, was only temporary. The first offspring of Hume's mind lay for a time in a state of suspended animation. Then the weakling revived, grew, waxed strong, and soon became the *enfant terrible* of modern philosophy, a veritable hydra of Lerna, one of the immortal works in epistemology. Hume's system has often been demolished, nay broken in pieces as a potper's vessel; but phoenix-like it always rises from the ruins, and assails its old enemy, dogmatism and rationalism, with renewed vigor. This indeed, thus far, may be said to be its chief function, if not its only *raison d' être*.

Contrasted with his proud claims for his philosophy, at the beginning of his task, the author's sober estimate of its worth, on the conclusion of his work, is significant and instructive. "I assure you," he wrote to Hutcheson,<sup>1</sup> "that without running any of the heights of skepticism, I am apt in a cool hour to suspect, in general, that most of my reasonings will be more useful by furnishing hints and exciting people's curiosity, than as containing any principles that will augment the stock of knowledge that must pass to future ages."

Progress in philosophy, as in other lines of thought, is the resultant of two contrary, but complementary forces: invention, and criticism. These are the two great intellectual powers that bear onward the life-giving light of civilization. And like the wings of the eagle, each is no less necessary to upward movement than is the other. Hume's mind, however, was crit-

<sup>1</sup> Burton, *Life*, I, p. 118; cf. I, p. 552.

ical, not constructive. He did not possess the inward eye of the poet, nor the spiritual vision of the prophet. He was constitutionally color-blind to some of the more important aspects of reality. But he had a supreme genius for destructiveness. His dialectic mind, like a logical machine, ground and analyzed with stoical indifference all things whatsoever that fell within its relentless grasp. Letters and science, theology and medicine, law and politics;—all have had their great iconoclasts. But no department of knowledge has been more fortunate in this respect, than has been “divine philosophy,” because of the resistless logic, and all-devouring criticism of Hume.

## APPENDIX A.

### OUTLINE OF THE RELATION OF THE TREATISE TO THE INQUIRY.

A Treatise of Human  
Nature.

An Inquiry concern-  
ing Human Un-  
derstanding.

Introduction to the  
Treatise of Human  
Nature.

§ 1. Of the Different Spe-  
cies of Philosophy;  
or Introduction to  
the theoretical part  
of the Treatise of  
Human Nature.

#### BOOK I.

Of the Understand-  
ing.

#### PART I.

Of Ideas, their Orig-  
in, Composition.

Abstraction, Connec-  
tion, etc.

§ 1. Of the Origin of our  
Ideas.

§ 2. Of the Origin of  
Ideas.

[§ 2. Division of the Sub-  
ject.]

[§ 3. Of the Ideas of the  
Memory and Im-  
agination.]

§ 4. Of the Connection  
or Association of  
Ideas.

§ 3. Of the Association of  
Ideas.

[§ 5. Of Relations.]

[§ 6. Of Modes and Substances.]

§ 7. Of Abstract Ideas.

§12. Of the Academical or Skeptical Philosophy.—Part II.

## PART II.

Of the Ideas of Space and Time.

§§1-5. Of the Ideas of Space and Time.

§12. Of the Academical or Skeptical Philosophy.—Part II.

§ 6. Of the Ideas of Existence and External Existence.

§12. Of the Academical or Skeptical Philosophy.—Part I.

## PART III.

Of Knowledge and Probability

§ 1. Of Knowledge.

§ 4. Skeptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding.—Part I.

§ 2. Of Probability; and of the Ideas of Cause and Effect.

§ 3. Why a Cause is always necessary.

§ 4. Of the Component Parts of our Reasonings concerning Causes and Effects.

§ 4. Skeptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding.—Part II.

§ 5. Of the Impressions of the Senses and Memory.



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| § 6. Of the Inference from<br>the Impression to<br>the Idea.      | § 5. Skeptical Solution of<br>these Doubts.—<br>Part I.  |
| § 7. Of the Nature of the<br>Idea, or Belief.                     | § 5. Skeptical Solution of<br>these Doubts.—<br>Part II. |
| § 8. Of the Causes of Be-<br>lief.                                |  |
| [§ 9. Of the Effects of<br>other Relations,<br>and other Habits.] |  |
| [§10. Of the Influence of<br>Belief.]                             |  |
| §11. Of the Probability of<br>Chances.                            | § 6. Of Probability<br>—Chances, and<br>Causes.          |
| 12. Of the Probability of<br>Causes.                              |  |
| [§13. Of Unphilosophical<br>Probability.]                         |  |
| §14. Of the Idea of Necess-<br>ary Connection.                    | § 7. Of the Idea of Necess-<br>ary Connection.           |
| [§15. Rules by which to<br>judge of Causes<br>and Effects.]       | [§ 8. Of Liberty and<br>Necessity.]                      |
| §16. Of the Reason of<br>Animals.                                 | § 9. Of the Reason of<br>Animals.                        |
|   | [§10. Of Miracles.]                                      |

## PART IV.

Of the Skeptical and  
other Systems of  
Philosophy.

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| § 1. Of Skepticism with<br>regard to Reason. | §12. Of the Academical or<br>Skeptical Philos-<br>ophy.—Part II. |
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| § 2. Of Skepticism with<br>regard to the<br>Senses. | §12. Of the Academical or<br>Skeptical Philos-<br>ophy.—Part I.   |
| [§ 3. Of the Ancient Phi-<br>losophy.]              |   |
| § 4. Of the Modern Phi-<br>losophy.]                |   |
| § 5. Of the Immateriality<br>of the Soul.           | §11. Of a Particular<br>Providence and of<br>a Future State.      |
| [§ 6. Of Personal Ident-<br>ity.]                   |   |
| § 7. Conclusion of this<br>Book.                    | §12. Of the Academical or<br>Skeptical Philos-<br>ophy.—Part III. |

## APPENDIX B.

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